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American literature in the
Colonial and National periods

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DENCO

American Literature
In the Colonial and National Periods

By the Same Author.

**THE HISTORY OF ORATORY FROM THE AGE OF
PERICLES TO THE PRESENT TIME.**

**THE OCCASIONAL ADDRESS: ITS COMPOSITION
AND LITERATURE. A STUDY IN DEMON-
STRATIVE ORATORY.**

**PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF LITERARY CRIT-
ICISM.**

American Literature
in the
Colonial and National Periods

BY
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Professor in Brown University

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INSCRIBED
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TO
WILLIAM JEWETT TUCKER, D.D., LL.D.
PRESIDENT OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

Preface

THE division of the subject made in the title seems warranted by the difference between ideas which prevailed in the first century and three-quarters and those in the remainder of the three centuries, almost, during which English-speaking people have lived and written in this country. In the first period the manner of life and thought was that of British colonists; in the last, that of American citizens. The transition was not immediate in letters, as it was not in politics, but the quarter-century during which independence was first devised and declared, and then won and acknowledged, contained a point where the dividing line may be drawn between two diverse literary periods. For convenience, 1783, the date of the Paris treaty, may serve as well as any. Further division has not been deemed essential to the present purpose.

This purpose is to indicate, by mention of leading authors and their works, the growth of letters in America, from such efforts as the earliest English immigrants were able to make, with the attainments they brought from home, down to achievements by citizens of a nation old enough to have a literature of its own, however much it may be indebted to treasures in other lands.

To make this development apparent, space has been given to representative authors rather than to enumeration of all who have contributed to the total production of the two periods. Care has been taken to make selections which exemplify, as well as their brevity will permit, the writers' manner and method, and that illustrate the spirit of the time and place in which they were written or of which they discourse.

L. S.

AUGUST, 1902.

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The Colonial Period

1607-1783

*“ Though the beginning may seeme harsh in regard of the Antiquities,
brevity, and names ; a pleasanter discourse ensues.”*

CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH.

American Literature

IN ITS COLONIAL & NATIONAL PERIODS

I

INTRODUCTORY

THERE are many indications of an increasing interest in colonial antiquities. The most obvious is the latest fashion in architecture, with its gambrel roofs, pillared porticos, yellow and white coloring, suggesting if not following the style of building in the eighteenth century. Such houses must be furnished in a manner to correspond, and the country-side is ransacked to find uncomfortable chairs, clocks whose altitude is greater than their accuracy, and sideboards with rheumatic joints. New factories are started to make old bric-à-brac, and good plate is battered into better. The children that run about these houses answer to ancient names like Dorothy, Gladys, and Sibyl — the more antique, like Keziah and Keturah, Benhadad and Barzillai, being dropped as too Hebraic for modern use. Then the colonial spirit spreads from the family to the community, and societies and organizations spring up to connect their members

with pilgrims and soldiers, governors and wars. We have our colonial dames, and they have their battles. There are sons and daughters of this and that, distinguished in proportion to the remoteness of their ancestry. So wide has the contagion spread that we have been threatened with a return of the full-skirted coat and long waistcoat, of small clothes and shoe buckles, although no one has yet suggested the earlier steeple hat, doublet, and trunk hose of the Puritan. Indeed, through all this Stuart and Hanoverian restoration a saving soberness of judgment has prevailed sufficient to keep it from running away with its advocates. At least, they have never taken kindly to the Cromwellian features of colonial art. Possibly some may discover signs of coming imperialism in this, and the slogan of the future may be the old song whose burden was :

“ In good old colony times,
When we lived under a king.”

After all, this looking backward and bringing forward is not a mere fad or temporary craze. Its lightest movements are as the foam on the surface which goes with a strong current underneath — the historical spirit of this generation, combined with a patriotism which means to honor the nation's founders by preserving the records of their doings. In everybody's desire to gather up Sibylline leaves before it is too late, it is not strange that family records and genealogies, old wills and inventories, surviving plate, spinning wheels, and even pewter mugs, should get into the drag-net. Who shall say what value any of these may have to the historian in coming centuries?

In view of this retrospective disposition of our time it would be glaringly inconsistent to overlook the writings

of the colonial period. If literature is a truer record of a people's life than the minutes of parliaments and town meetings, it cannot be neglected for historical reasons. Besides, literature has a history of its

Colonial
Writings.

own, any part of which cannot be understood without some knowledge of what has gone before. A people may change its political status in a day, or declare that it has done so, but in the domain of letters, as in that of nature, there is a continuous growth which knows no sudden changes. There is no broad cleavage between its after development and its early struggles for life. These may be forgotten or derided, as a man laughs at his own youthful efforts, without which he would never have come to distinction. It is pleasant to look upon the strong trunk and branches of a tree with its wealth of foliage and fruit, and easy to forget the ungainly roots below ground, but the tree does not forget that through them comes its life from remote fountains, and its staying power. Accordingly, when we grow self-complacent over our recent attainments in letters, and are amused, as we cannot help being, at the exploits of our forbears, it is well to recall some sturdy qualities in their literature, as in their life. Above all, it will be needful to keep in mind a few circumstances and conditions which differed from those in which we are placed, and helped to make colonial literature unlike that of the present day.

First, it should be remembered that it was written by colonists of Great Britain. It is not easy to understand all that this meant to our forefathers. For a century and a quarter the ruling ideas which

Represent
British Ideas.

Declaration of Independence. A visit to Canada will not invariably make them clear to a citizen of the United States. They are a matter of inheritance and faithful cherishing by colonists who have never revolted.

For one hundred and twenty-five years we have been throwing to the winds a legacy for which we have no more use than for crowns and thrones. In this way we have forgotten how largely these once substantial realities entered into the thinking and writing of Americans. Not that royalty always obtruded itself into the kingdom of letters, but, like the weather, it had its inspiring or depressing effect, according to its mood. How often and how much this varied can be clearly traced in the complexion of the colonial documents, public and private. It changed with different monarchs and with the same ruler on different occasions, sometimes on account of atmospheric changes in New England or Virginia. But in the main the colonist was sensible of his connection with the mother country and was affectionately proud of it. He was an Englishman abroad, cultivating and defending a part of the British empire. When he visited England he spoke of going home. His ships brought back other Englishmen, the wares, ideas, and fashions of London. When he could afford it he sent his sons to Oxford or Cambridge, and they brought back the law, medicine, and some of the theology they learned there.

Then there was what may be called the court literature, which was a factor in colonial production. What pleased king and courtiers was likely to find general favor and a publisher. The fashion once set, there were pens enough to follow it and to give a popular tone to literature in England, which would be imitated in America, provided it

did not clash with colonial tastes and principles. This, however, is an important proviso. Perhaps the first movement toward independence that can be discovered was the refusal to follow the literary leading of Charles the Second's dramatists and poets. Boston laid an embargo upon them long before it pitched taxed tea overboard. However, this was carried too far, and books were interdicted that would have been good for New Englanders.

While, then, the colonists were loyal to British ideas, they never forgot that they were Britons, with the national habit of thinking for themselves, often aloud and in black and white. This independence was fostered here by their distance from home, their isolation, and devotion to a few principles which they came here to maintain. As a consequence, their writings became intensely provincial. They could not well be otherwise. The new country was full of strange interest to Pilgrim and Puritan.

They were aware that they were committed to an enterprise with boundless prospects for the future, and that the eyes of Europe were upon them. Meantime, their own world was the little settlement between the wide ocean and the wilderness.

Their vision gradually became limited to the neighborhood with its meeting-house, school, magistrate, and minister. The last of these was commonly what they called him — their teacher. He was expected to furnish ideas, to do most of the reading, to be leader and guide, critic and censor for the community. In return they asserted the right to discuss his propositions and criticise his manner. But the discussion and the criticism, the word spoken, and finally the word written, were

And English
Liberty.

Narrowing
Influences.

largely in theologic and polemic lines, and at length in political.

The remainder was personal and town talk. The diary and the journal, the narrative and the minutes of the assembly, had for them the importance of what is near, personal, and present. They could not distinguish the perishable from the permanent in their materials for history. Everything was in the foreground, like a Japanese landscape. The death of an elder's calf and the drowning of his neighbor are chronicled in the same entry. The arrival of a belle from London and of a royal charter create equal commotions. Variations from the sermon, the journal, or the narrative for English readers consisted in poetic effusions which could not be wholly restrained, even when poetry was under a ban. The early colonist put a cork in the bottle of his fancy, wired it down, and when it began to fizz put it under his cloak or carried it into his cellar. Bound to escape or burst the bottle, the muse was released with the chokings and gurglings of a strangled culprit. She had a cracked, nasal, doleful voice and uncertain gait to the end. Her sober strains were mournful and agonizing; her merry moods like the gambols of a hippopotamus; her eulogistic performances like the contortions of a juggler. Certainly the glory of colonial literature is not in its verse.

Much more can be said for its political writings in later years and the speeches which were preserved by the scanty reporting of the time. In these directions the colonist won distinction at home and abroad. Toward them the course of events carried him inevitably, and the strength of his mind and the impulses of his heart went with pen and tongue in high political discourse. The

liberties of a nation were largely won by its masterly achievements in this kind.

Readers of this brief and general survey may wonder what there can be in our colonial writings to enlist attention. The best answer is: Read them and see. As, however, they are not all easily accessible, the best that can be done here will be to mention representative writers and where their "literary remains" may be found, giving extracts when worth giving, and noting changes for the better through which the provincial advanced to the national.

Few always consider how long a period was occupied in this evolution, or the fact that the colonial years exceed those of our national life thus far by fifty-seven — one hundred and seventy-six against one hundred and nineteen. But the relative growth of the last period cannot be balanced by the greater length of the first, nor the improvement that has been made in letters as in every other art. Still, whether colonial or national, American literature should appeal to Americans. The love and the study of letters should begin at home, however widely they may broaden out in sympathy and attainment. Whether English or American in any particular stage of its growth here, our literature is the product of our race and of our soil, and is something of which in any age we need not be ashamed, when environment is considered.

II

JOHN SMITH AND COMPANY

AMERICAN antiquities are scarce and widely separated. Compared with those of the old world they are recent — and also unproductive of large revenues from fees. Of the few we have, the most interesting is the old church tower which marks the place on the James River where in May, 1607, a hundred Englishmen disembarked to establish the first government and church within the territory of what is now the United States. They likewise began a literature there which has grown with the growth of the nation.

Incidentally and parenthetically it may be observed, that there is no spot which should be of greater interest to Americans than the plot of fifty acres, now in charge of the Virginia Antiquarian Society, where can be seen all that time and the river have spared of the beginnings of the republic. Now and then a traveller steps off the Norfolk and Richmond boat at the end of a long landing-stage, probably not far from the former shore line, and has a few hours for meditation, — which he can continue if he chooses at old Williamsburg, seven miles inland. In 1907 it is expected that many pilgrims will gather to celebrate the three hundredth anniversary of the planting of the first permanent settlement in America, of which one John Smith was the foremost man.

John Smith of Lincolnshire, with York and Lancaster blood in him, was no discredit to his ancestors, even if he did run away from school and home and —

Smith as a
Soldier of
Fortune.

“Ship himself all aboard of a ship,
Foreign countries for to see.”

He saw them to some purpose and as a soldier of fortune, as Ashton his contemporary calls him, in France and the Low Countries, in Italy and Transylvania, fighting Spaniard, Turk, and Tartar. The last knight-errant of English chivalry in quest of adventure, he tilts in tournament with three Turkish champions, the token of whose severed heads is blazoned on his heraldic escutcheon by order of Prince Sigismund Bathor. Fortune turning, he becomes the slave of a Bashaw and the favorite of a princess at Constantinople, escapes, turns up in Barbary, fights pirates, shares booty, and finally returns to England to hear of recent American discoveries, among them “the blessed herb tobacco,” casts in his lot with Gosnold, Wingfield, and divers gentlemen to sail for Virginia and to search for the South Sea as the repository of immense riches.

What they did find on the 26th of April, 1607, was a great store of roast oysters left by decamping natives, and nothing more valuable than the pearls in the shells. It was the beginning of a well-known story of disappointment and sickness, disaster and death, of which only the literary side can be touched upon here. Reading the melancholy account of the encampment on the flats by the tidewater of the James river, it would not be fair to expect great achievements in literature amidst such surroundings.

Yet the redoubtable Smith, who had hewn his way through the world with a sword, does not hesitate to pick

up the quill of a wild goose — the best of pens for the story of a chase for gold such as he had to record. To be

As a Writer. sure, he is as apologetic as any new author, and fortifies himself at the start with the remark that other soldiers "have writ with their pens what their swords have done," and he counts it no disgrace to follow their example, as others since have followed his. But his manner of writing suggests the sword rather than the pen, stabbing upon paper as with a dagger point his sharp sentences. It is not the clerkly style, but that of a soldier, hirsute and bristling with helmet, back and breast plates, sitting in a hut of logs and mud, armed and prepared for morning calls of aboriginal visitors on mischief bent, interrupted on every page by business or brawl of comrades, and for days together by expeditions of discovery or diplomacy in savage wilds. Yet out of this turmoil and distraction he contrives to wrest letters which shall induce other Englishmen of spirit to join the little company for its advantage and their own. What is known as the "True Relation," or "News from Virginia," doubtless contains the substance of those early letters. How much it was tampered with later must be left to the critics to settle among themselves, but there are passages in it that bear the ear-mark of Captain John. For example :

"The next day came first an Indian, then another as ambassadors to speak with me. Our discourse was, that what spades, shovels, swords, or tools, they had stolen, to bring home (if not the next day they should hang). The next news was they had taken two of our men, ranging in the woods, which mischief no punishment will prevent but hanging, and these they should redeem with their own. Sixteen or eighteen thus braving us to our doors we desired to sally upon them, that they might know

what we durst to do, and at night manned our barge and burnt their towns and destroyed and spoiled what we could, but they brought our men and freely delivered them. The president released one, the rest we brought, well guarded, to morning and evening prayers. Our men all in arms, their trembling fear then caused them much sorrow which till then scoffed and scorned at what we durst do. The council concluded that I should terrify them with some torture."

It is interesting to observe here the combination of an executive and a missionary spirit, and that the zeal of conquest was accompanied by compulsory attendance on the daily services. Also that religious observances prevailed in the planting of American civilization. More to the present purpose it is to note the jagged style, which originally was without intelligible punctuation, and had a lawless distribution of capitals and divisions of sentences. But the mixture of force and piety, of enterprise and bad grammar belongs to all our early history.

In his dedication of his "History of Virginia" to the Duchess of Richmond, Smith says:—"I have deeply hazarded myself in doing and suffering, and why should I stick to hazard my reputation in recording? Where shall we look to find a Julius Cæsar whose achievements shine as clear in his own Commentaries as they did in the field? But because I am no compiler by hearsay, but have been a real actor, I have therefore been bold to challenge them to come under the reach of my rough pen." He also lays the responsibility of his writing his "Travels and Adventures" upon Sir Robert Cotton, and also upon the perversion by contemporaries of his previous books, saying: "They have acted my fatal tragedies upon the stage and racked my relations at their pleasure." Doubtless this was a

stroke at some of William Shakespeare's company at the Mermaid tavern.

If in any of the eight books, large and small, which he wrote after the "News from Virginia," and six of them in England during a score of years — if in them Of Romancing Turn. he borders upon the marvellous at times, it must be remembered that he was a strong man, with the capacity of making the most and best of everything, himself included; that he had an enlarging lens for facts, and a royally romantic imagination with respect to distant events, and that he had Sir John Mandeville to precede him in stories of travel and Baron Munchausen to follow him in accounts of exploits among the Turks. It is possible that a great romancer was spoiled when he threw aside his Machiavelli's "Art of War" and Marcus Aurelius, his two favorite authors, and started to serve under Rudolf of Hungary. Nevertheless, his principal so-called fable of the Pocahontas episode has been fairly well established as true, his early silence being accounted for by a prudent reserve with regard to aboriginal customs toward intruders, lest Englishmen should be kept at home by visions of clubs and stony pillows. This story once confirmed, Smith's other narrations and descriptions may be taken with as little salt as should be administered with most histories of his day, such as Hakluyt's "Voyages" and Purchas' "Pilgrims" and "Pilgrimage."

After all, it will be convenient to pack upon English shoulders most of the fault that is found with the literary shortcomings of the first man who wrote in America; for he went home in two and a half years to stay, and to write there for twenty more. "We were still to be accounted Englishmen," he said of the colonists when they settled in

Virginia, "which might be of use when any of our number returned to England." With all his affection and longing for the colony from which he had been removed by the unwisdom of its London managers, it is not probable that he ever called himself an American author. Still, he was the beginner of colonial letters, and as such it is pleasant to connect so forceful and graphic a writer with their earliest history. Of himself he says in the Preface to the "History of Virginia":

"I ever intended that my actions should be upright: now my care hath been that my Relations should give every man they concerne, their due. But had I not discovered and lived in the most of these parts, I could not possibly have collected the substantiall truth from such a number of variable Relations, that would have made a Volume at least of a thousand sheets. Though the beginning may seeme harsh in regard of the Antiquities, brevity, and names; a pleasanter discourse ensues. The style of a soldier is not eloquent, but honest and justifiable; so I desire all my friends and well wishers to accept it, and if any be so noble as to respect it, he that brought New England to light though long since brought in obscuritie, he is againe to be found a true servant to all good designs."

The reader who wishes to find the best that Smith wrote, and to Americans the most interesting, will look for his "History of Virginia," which every public library should have. If he is not led on page after page with increasing interest in the narratives and the descriptions, it will be because he has no appreciation of adventure and no eye for the picturesque. There will be some rough reading, but if the test of a writer be the sustained interest in his story, John Smith will be found to acquit himself as creditably in the field of literature as

on the field of battle, albeit his methods are somewhat similar in both, as in the following :

“ I had them depart, but flourishing their swords, they seemed but to defend what they could catch but out of our hands, his pride urged me to turne him from amongst us, whereat he offered to strike me with his sword, which I prevented, striking him first: the rest offering to revenge the blow, received such an incounter and fled ; the better to affright them, I pursued them with five or six shot, and so chased them out of the Iland: the beginning of this broyle, little expecting by his carriage, we durst have resisted, having even till that present, not beene contradicted, especially them of Paspahigh ; these Indians within one houre, having by other Salvages, then in the Fort, understood that I threatened to be revenged, came presently of themselves, and fell to working upon our wears, which were then in hand by other Salvages, who seeing their pride so incountered, were so submissive and willing to doe anything as might be, and with trembling feare, desired to be friends within three daies after.”

The reader of this passage from the “ True Relation ” — the earliest published account of the first year at Jamestown — will rate the captain’s courage higher than his literary sense. The strength of his sentence is equalled if not surpassed by its length and rambling. And he will wonder how the “ Newes from Virginia ” read to sundry playwrights in London, who in those days were looking for material to work up for the delectation of the crowd at Blackfriars and the Globe theatres.

There were other writers in the company first and last who contributed chapters to Smith’s history and wrote letters and little books of their own. As late as 1618, John Rolfe, Pocahontas’ husband, complains of scandalous letters sent to England “ to

Other Writers
in the
Company.

disgrace this country with barrenness, to discourage adventurers, to bring it and us to ruin and confusion . . . such devilish bad minds we know some of our countrymen to have not only to the business, but also to our mother England herself." Thomas Studley and Annas Todkill wrote of discoveries and accidents in Virginia; also Anthony Bagnall and Nathaniel Powell. Richard Pots and William Tankard, thirsty names, complain of the supplies sent, and especially of the kind of colonists, "for all the rest were poor gentlemen, tradesmen, serving men, libertines and such like, ten times more fit to spoil a commonwealth than to begin or help to maintain one." William Parker and Ralph Hamor write about Powhatan; Thomas Dale, Master Whitaker and Samuel Argall about Pocahontas; Henry May and John Evans about shipwrecks upon the Bermudas, or the "Ile of Devils that all men did shun as hell and perdition." These "Relations" Smith adapts or adopts as editor of the "History of Virginia," which finally expands to take in the "Trials and Profits of New England" and several other topics.

In addition to these occasional contributors, a few colonists left longer memorials of their stay. George Sandys, son of an archbishop of York, turned ten books of Ovid into English amid shades that were more savage than classic, and Father Andrew White rendered his English thoughts about Maryland into Latin under similar conditions. Master Strachey in his "Wrack and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates" anticipated Shakespeare's Ariel passage in the "Tempest," if he did not suggest it, and George Alsop addressed the shade of Cromwell in lines that would have made trouble for him in New England.

“ Here lies that Oliver which of old betrayed
His King and master, and after did assume,
With swelling pride to govern in his room.”

And in this: “To an Old Velvet Cap”:

“ Say, didst thou cover Noll’s old brazen head ?
Which on the top of Westminster’s high lead
Stands on a pole erected to the sky
As a grand trophy to his memory ? ”

More mournful verses were written for Nathaniel Bacon’s epitaph, and polemic prose growing out of his “Rebellion against Berkeley.” George Percy, brother of the Earl of Northumberland, discoursed of the spring paradise of Virginia, and later of the summer pestilence and wasting, and Alexander Whitaker, son of the president of a Cambridge college and a devoted missionary to the Indians, attempts to interest Englishmen in their welfare.

Taken together, the writers in the John Smith company were the best of it in those early years when every social grade was represented in the motley crowd that came over in the “Susan Constant,” the “God-speed” and the “Discovery.” At least it was the men of letters who made for themselves a memorial which has outlasted the fame of Dru Pickhouse, adventurer, and Abram Ransack, refiner of gold ; of Post Ginnat, surgeon, Larence Towtales, tailor, and Rob Allerton, perfumer. Even the uncouth compositions of John Smith, soldier and pioneer, captain, councillor, and governor, have done more to preserve his fame than his fighting and his administration. There is a barbaric strength and directness in them which are preservative elements, and their recommendation in stirring

times when such qualities may be needed. Besides, these writings enshrine the beginnings of American history in a form not unsuited to the rough experiences of its earliest makers. The same may be said of the half dozen principal writers of this primitive age in Virginia and the sister colony of Maryland.

If the reader should wish to explore the literature of this early time he will find the most of it in the printed records of historical societies. Some of Smith's writings are published in volumes by themselves, but those of other writers here mentioned will be found in his "History of Virginia," or in Purchas' books. In "Force's Historical Tracts" there are reprints of interesting narratives, also in the magazine published by the Virginia Historical Society and in the volumes of the Massachusetts Historical Society Collections. Other references might be given, but these may be sufficient for the present purpose.

III

PLYMOUTH DIARISTS

THIRTEEN years after one hundred Englishmen landed in Virginia amid the bloom and fragrance of the southern springtime, another hundred disembarked on the bleak coast of Cape Cod in the dead of winter. Both companies were English; so were Charles the First and Cromwell and the two great parties of Churchmen and Puritans — Cavaliers and Roundheads, as they called each other. The four hundred miles of coast between the two settlements may stand for the difference between them in several particulars.

With respect to what may be called their literature, there is no greater diversity than in their religious, political, and social principles and customs. Both used, and helped to preserve, the English speech of their time; but each colony had its own way of looking at things temporal and spiritual, and each had a landscape of its own to contemplate and a climate of its own to enjoy or contend with. These and other causes made the thoughts of the New England farmers and fishermen differ from those of the Virginia planters. For example, while southern immigrants came here for gain or adventure, having no quarrel with church or state at home, the northern contingent left England in order to secure for themselves a larger liberty in religious matters. This liberty, however, was to be enjoyed by

themselves exclusively, or by those who should be of their way of thinking. Such purposes produced marked characteristics in their writings — first a pietistic element, later a polemic, and finally a pugilistic.

It should be observed that neither of these features was disagreeably present in the earliest of their compositions. The principal writers were in the mood to justify their separation from the mother country by a fair-minded setting forth of their reasons for leaving it, having all the while a certain homesick regard for much that they had left behind. Moreover, at first they were men of balanced minds, with a restraint in their speech bred of the consciousness that their readers were to be the great public in Britain, upon whose good will the prosperity of their enterprise was largely dependent. Accordingly the first letters at Plymouth were pervaded with the sobriety of the colonist whose conscience had sent him adrift from the land he loved.

Simplicity of
Early Writ-
ings.

William Bradford is the earliest of these chroniclers, whose record of the first twenty-seven years of Plymouth history became the quarry from which subsequent compilers dug much material. The original manuscript, long lost and detained in England, was received in 1897 from the Bishop of London by the State of Massachusetts at the hands of the American ambassador with almost as much reverent ceremony as if the author himself had returned to Boston. Next to reading this document, now two hundred and fifty years old, is the easier privilege of perusing the fair new copy with facsimile illustration, published in 1898 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Only a paragraph or two can be cited here to illustrate the equable temper and

William
Bradford's
History.

straightforward narration of the second colonial governor and the plain English of a scholarly man who could speak or, like Bekker, be silent in five languages. They certainly had not smothered the clear Saxon and the strong idioms of his mother tongue.

“For these and some other reasons they [the English pilgrims] removed to Leyden, a fair and beautiful city and of sweet situation, but made more famous by the university wherewith it is adorned, in which of late had been so many learned men. But wanting that traffic by sea which Amsterdam enjoys, it was not beneficial for their outward means of living and estates. But now being here pitched they fell to such trades and employments as they best could, balancing peace and their spiritual comfort above any other riches whatsoever. And at length they came to raise a competent and comfortable living, but with hard and continual labor.”

Later follows an account of the departure from Holland, of delays and reverses in getting away from England, of a tempestuous voyage, and finally of the arrival at Cape Cod.

“Being thus arrived in a good harbor and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed ye God of heaven who had brought them over ye vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries therof, againe to set their feete on ye firme and stable earth, their proper elemente. And no marvell if they were thus joyefull, seeing wise Seneca was so affected with sailing a few miles on ye coast of his own Italy; as he affirmed that he had rather remaine twentie years on his way by land, than pass by sea to any place in a short time; so tedious and dreadfull was ye same unto him. . . .

“And for the reason that it was winter, and they that know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent and subject to cruel and fierce storms, dangerous to travel to known places, much more to search an unknown coast.

"Besides, what could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men? And what multitudes there might be of them they knew not. . . . If they looked behind them there was the mighty ocean which they had passed and was now as a main bar or gulf to separate them from all the civil parts of the world."

To use the author's words, "Sundry other things I pass over as being tedious and not pertinent." Others there are, full of the interest which belongs to the history that is written as fast as it is made, portraying with graphic particularity the going out and the coming in of a people. The departure of the "Mayflower" on the return voyage; the arrival of the "Fortune;" the treaty with Massasoit; the trouble with Lyford and Oldome, and the castaway crew which brought both profit and disturbance; the dishonesty of agents and factors; the capture of Sir Christopher Gardiner; the arrival of Roger Williams; the settlement on the Connecticut and trouble on the Kennebec; the meddlesome French; a hurricane on the coast; the fight with the Pequots, and finally the "breaking out of sundry notorious sins," and the punishment according to Mosaic law,—such incidents and events are faithfully and impartially set down in a charitable temper and with as true a sense of proportionate importance as a chronicler of a little neighborhood can be expected to have. Most remarkable for that time is an unusual freedom from imputing the disasters of enemies to the judgment of heaven, and not too much assuming that the settlers at Plymouth were the chosen people of the new dispensation. In short, Bradford represents the hard common sense which the first colonists brought with them; and his plain annals, year after year, are the unbiased record of

a humble but sturdy people, conscious of a high mission which they girded themselves to fulfil.

It is not easy to say which is the most interesting portion of this fascinating record of a quarter of a century, extending through five hundred pages and more in the edition of 1898. The American citizen who takes up this chronicle of origins will not dismiss it half read. He will be pleased to note how the experiment of a community of goods, which every fresh settlement must try, turned out at Plymouth:—

“So they begane to thinke how they might raise as much corne as they could, and obtain a better crope then they had done that they might not still thus languish in miserie. At length, after much debate of things the Gov^r (with the advise of the cheefest among them) gave way that they should set corne every man for his owne perticuler, and in that regard trust to them selves; in all other things to goe on in ye geneerall way as before. And so assigned to every family a parcell of land. . . . This had very good success; for it made all hands very industrious, so as more corne was planted then other waise would have bene by any means. . . . The women now wente willingly into the field, and tooke their little-ons with them to set corne, which before would aledg weaknes, and inabilitie; whom to have compelled would have been thought great tiranie and oppression.

“The experience that was had in this comon course and condition, tried sundrie years, and that amongst godly and sober men, may well evince the vanitie of that conceit of Plato’s and other ancients, applauded by some of later times;—that the taking away of propertie, and bringing in communitie into a comone wealth, would make them happy and flourishing; as if they were wiser than God. For this comunitie (so farr as it was) was found to breed much confusion and discontent, and retard much imployment that would have been to their benefite and comforte.

“For ye yong-men that were most able and fitte for labour and service did repine that they should spend their time and streingth to worke for other men’s wives and children, without any recompence. . . . And for men’s wives to be commanded to doe servise for other men, as dresing their meate, washing their cloathes, &c. they deemed it a kind of slaverie, neither could many husbands well brooke it. . . . Let none object this is men’s corruption and nothing to the course itself. I answer, seeing all men have this course in them, God in his wisdom saw another course fiter for them.”

Edward Winslow was the associate of Bradford, keeping what may be called a day-book as compared with Bradford’s ponderous year-book. This journal begins with the departure from England Sep-
Edward Winslow.
tember 6, 1620, summarizing the two months’ voyage in a single line, and taking up the continuous record on the day they sighted land, November 9th. For forty days there is the account of attempts to find a suitable place in which to settle, the little shallop hovering and flitting about like a distrustful bird. On board the “Mayflower” there were signs of faction and along shore of Indians. So the famous compact was made and signed, and the same day were “set ashore fifteen or sixteen men well armed to see what the land was and what the inhabitants they could meet with.” The narrative of these first amphibious days reads like the story of a winter picnic on a desolate coast. There is no woeful lamentation over the necessity of wading ashore in icy brine — only the simple observation that colds were caught which were the death of many during the winter. The chief regret is for lack of fish-hooks and harpoons, but this is counterbalanced by delight at finding corn and beans hidden, which the

discoverers took with the inward promise of paying for it in the future — as they did. The account of the first encounter with savages and their college yell, "Woach, woach, ha ha hach woach," is not in the recent style of the cowboy novel. Breaking camp and advancing "after prayer," but with their powder dry, the vanguard soon came running in with arrows flying after them. "In the meantime Captain Miles Standish, having a snaphance ready, made a shot and after him another. The cry of our enemies was dreadful." At last the chief was hit and ran away "with an extraordinary cry. Thus it pleased God to vanquish our enemies and give us deliverance. So after we had given God thanks we took our shallop and went on our journey" toward Plymouth.

"And coming upon a strange Iland we kept our watch all night in the raine upon that Iland: and in the morning we marched about it and found no Inhabitants at all, and here wee made our Randevous all that day, being Saturday.

"10. of December [O. S.], on the Sabboth day wee rested, and on Munday we sounded the Harbour of Plymouth and found it a very good Harbour for our shipping. We marched also into the Land, and found divers corne fields, and little running brookes, a place very good for situation, so we returned to our Ship againe with good newes to the rest of our people, which did much comfort their hearts."

The first clause of this last sentence, — "We marched also into the land," is the plain record of the first landing, on the 21st of December [N. S.], 1620, of the ten Pilgrim pioneers, to wit, Standish, Carver, Bradford, Winslow, John Tilley, Edward Tilley, John Howland, Richard Warren, Stephen Hopkins, and Edward Doten, with seven of the ship's company.

The unadorned simplicity of the statement is worthy of the first step of a "march into the land" which has been going on ever since in the same westward direction. There is no dramatic account of planting the British flag, as there certainly could have been no planting of a cross, after the manner of other pioneers.

The story of the second landing is told in a record of repeated ventures ashore of small parties and their return to the ship (lying a mile and a half away) through a period of forty days. Then follow these brief entries:—

"Saturday 30. [Jan.] we made up our Shed for our common goods."

"Sunday the 31. we kept our Meeting on Land."

But one looks in vain for any line that could be written under the familiar picture of the "Landing of the Pilgrims." However, the Nation which then and there came ashore has been faithful to the tradition of the elders, and has evermore kept its goods dry and also kept its meetings sacredly on Sunday, however great the seeming necessity of labor. And then an equally characteristic line: "On Munday the 1 [Feb.] we wrought on our houses, and the rest of the weeke we followed our business likewise."

In all this journal, which is continued for thirteen months, there is the same plain and unaffected simplicity of narration where heroic doing and suffering are recounted, and the almost childlike joy at any little measure of good fortune. The best commendation of the unadorned record is to say, that it sets down the truth as it appeared to men of strong sense, having spirit and zealous purpose to do well the hard task they had undertaken. As a document it is a minute and faithful account of the first year in the northern colony, as Bradford's History was that of the first

twenty-five years. Winslow continued his part of the journal for two years more in his "Good News from New England." As writers they both had the historian's discrimination in omitting irrelevant and trivial matters when the temptation to mention such must have been great in the narrowness of the place and time of their writing.

Besides the above, Governor Bradford wrote "A Dialogue Between Some Young Men in New England and Sundry Ancient Men out of Holland and Old England," also a "Memoir of Elder William Brewster." Winslow wrote a "Brief Narration of the True Grounds or Cause of the First Planting of New England." All these and more may be read in "Young's Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers," to be found in any collection of works on early colonial history. Together they constitute the sum of what is worth reading among the writings of the first decade in the Plymouth plantation. They are as true and honest, as simple and unaffected as the social life they record, and sometimes as picturesque as the surroundings they describe. Afterward came another manner, with a fresh influx of colonists not like the first, and new elements began to appear in a literature that was in many respects primitive, and features were added which lacked the homely simplicity of the heroic age.

IV

THREE BAY MEN

THOMAS MORTON of Merry Mount was a settler and a writer who did not allow himself or his writings to be overlooked by the men of Plymouth. Into their perpendicular life he plunged with music and dancing. Between their sombre lines he scribbled with porcupine's quill. Accordingly, though he lived thirty miles away by Indian trail, they sent him three thousand miles by ship as soon as they could. "Morton of Clifford's inn, gent," as he subscribed himself, was a left-over sample of the independent fortune-hunters who now and then made their way to these shores. His was an instance of the survival of the strongest in Captain Wallaston's little company, which came to Massachusetts Bay in 1625. He gathered discontented fellows and Indians about him, trading with the last in the dangerous currency of rum and muskets, powder and ball. He also set up a maypole, around which he held greenwood revelry, composing "a song to be sung with a chorus, every man bearing his part." It is one of the freaks of literary history that the first effusion of the poetic muse in staid New England should run as follows:

"Make green garlands, bring bottles out,
And fill sweet nectar freely about;
Uncover thy head, and fear no harm,
For here 's good liquor to keep it warm,"

with other stanzas and a chorus to correspond.

Barring their bacchanalian spirit, they are far superior in execution to the Bay psalmistry, which the theologic muse travailed to produce in all that century. As for their beery flavor, the Pilgrims themselves had not taken the temperance pledge, though the trade in New England rum had not yet begun, and "good ale was still the loadstone by which Englishmen steered their course."

Morton's "New English Canaan" is like many of the descriptions of the country which immigrants were con-

His "New
English
Canaan."

tinually making, partly in the spirit of discovery in a strange land and partly as an inducement for friends to follow. The most of it was written during one of his compulsory visits in England, but as he returned to end his days on the coast of Maine it may be regarded as no less American than some of John Smith's narratives. He proves, as many writers since have proved, that "New England is the principal part of all America;" discourses of the natives, their origin, their customs; of the country, its beasts, birds, and fishes, its trees, minerals, and waters; of battles, powwows, and revels; and finally of the "Nine Worthies of New Canaan," who put him in durance vile, and how he "played Jonas after he got out of the whale's belly," with many other things which "Captain Shrimp" (Miles Standish) and his company did not relish when they read the sprightly account of their doings to this Robin Hood, an outlaw in the New Forest of Massachusetts Bay. If they had possessed the least sense of humor—a scarce article in that decade—they would have laughed in their sleeves over his description of their position "betwixt Hawk and Buzzard;" of laymen "exercising their gifts by way of prophecy, so they do not make use of any

notes to help their memory ;” of the court that condemned him to the bilbowes and burned his house ; of the preacher who traded for a beaver coat after a sermon against Sunday barter, and of his own exile upon an island for savages to succor. This is his account of the affair.

“How the 9 worthies put mine Host of Ma-re Mount into the inchaunted Castle at Plimouth, and terrified him with the Monster Briareus.

“The nine worthies of New Canaan having the Law in their owne hands, (there being no generall Governour in the Land ; nor none of the separation that regarded the duty they owe their Sovereigne, whose natural born Subjects they were, though translated out of Holland, from whence they had learned to worke all to their owne ends, and make a great shewe of Religion, but no humanity,) for they were now to sit in Counsell on the cause.

“And much it stood mine honest Host upon [Morton himself] to be very circumspect, and to take Eacus to taske ; for that his voyce was more allowed of than both the other : and had not mine Host confounded all the arguments that Eacus could make in their defence, and confuted him that swaied the rest, they would have made him unable to drinke in such manner of merriment any more. So that following this private counsell, given him by one who ruled the rost, the Hircano ceased that els would split his pinace.

“A conclusion was made and sentence given that mine Host should be sent to England a prisoner. But when hee was brought to the shippes for that purpose, no man durst be so foole hardy as to undertake to carry him. So these worthies set mine Host upon an Island, without gunne, powther, or shot or dogge or so much as a knife to get any thinge to feed upon, or any other cloathes to shelter him with at winter then a thinne suite which he had on at that time. Home hee could not get to Ma-re Mount. Upon this Island hee stayed a month at least, and was

releaved by Salvages that tooke notice that mine Host was a Sachem of Passonagessit, and would bring bottles of strong liquor to him, and unite themselves into a league of brotherhood with mine Host; so full of humanity are these infidels before those Christians.

“From this place for England sailed mine Host in a Plimouth shipp, (that came into the Land to fish upon the Coast,) that landed him safe in England at Plimouth: and hee staid in England untill the ordinary time for shipping to set forth for these parts, and then returned: Noe man being able to taxe him of any thinge. But the Worthies, (in the mean time,) hoped they had binn rid of him.”

Of all this and more the forefathers could not see the amusing side, as cheerfully depicted by an interloper who had not deserted the Church of England and had brought with him a love of English sports and principles of free trade deemed subversive of the commonwealth. With all this bad form, however — and some of it cropped out in his composition — he introduced into the dreary diarizing of the time spicy features which will save his chronicle from the fate of better, but less interesting books. Those who wish to read this view of New England will find it in the third volume of “Force’s Tracts,” and in the Adams annotated edition of the Prince Society, Boston, 1883. Hawthorne, Motley, and Parkman have made Merry Mount and its lord of misrule the subject of story.

It has been supposed that the ungente and dreary aspects of nature always encompassed the lives of the first settlers. With all his mishaps at their hands, Morton did not so regard the “New Canaan”:

“In the moneth of June, Anno Salutis 1622, it was my chaunce to arrive in the parts of New England with 30 Servants

and provision of all sorts fit for a plantation: and whiles our houses were building I did indeavour to take a survey of the Country: The more I looked the more I liked it. And when I had more seriously considered of the bewty of the place, with all her faire indowments, I did not thinke that in all the knowne world it could be parallel'd, for so many goodly groves of trees, dainty fine round rising hillocks, delicate faire large plaines, sweete cristall fountaines, and cleare running streames that twine in fine meanders through the meads, making so sweete a murmuring noise to heare as would even lull the sences with delight to sleepe, so pleasantly doe they glide upon the pebble stones. Contained within the volume of this Land [are] Fowles in abundance, Fish in multitude; and I discovered, besides, millions of Turtledoves on the greene boughes, which sat pecking of the full ripe pleasant grapes that were supported by the lusty trees, whose fruitfull loades did cause the armes to bend: among which here and there dispersed, you might see Lillies and of the Daphnean tree: which made the Land to mee seeme paradise; Her Cheefest Magazine of all where lives her store: if this Land be not rich, then is the whole world poore."

The enumeration of fish, flesh, and fowl that follows would make a sportsman's mouth water. In this particular there is probably more foundation for his statements than in some others which he makes with corresponding extravagance.

John Winthrop was leader of the Puritan migration to the Bay of Massachusetts ten years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth. These nine hundred later colonists were generally men of means, educa-
John
Winthrop.
tion, and position, strongly attached to their native land and its church, as distinct from ceremonies and government. Settled here, their leader became their governor and historian, who began his diurnal record on the day they sailed from the Isle of Wight, and continued it for forty years in

the wilderness. It is a faithful reflection of himself and of the life which the community led day after day. The consciousness of planting an empire is always present, therefore the record is always grave and sometimes solemn with a more than present importance. In this early morning of American civilization the shadows cast by everything were long, and the primitive chronicler did not see how short some of them would grow as the day wore on. Little events were mixed with greater ones in the necessity of recording something every day. The journalizer is positive that small occurrences in the beginning of a nation have an importance that will grow with its growth. Therefore he writes down with equal fidelity the drowning of his son Henry, and the killing of six calves by wolves. The execution of Billington for murder and the burning of the minister's haystack are events of corresponding value. So are a conference of elders and the explosion of an overloaded musket, also a burning chimney and the calling of John Eliot as teacher of the church at Roxbury. The straying of a calf and the wandering of the governor a night in the forest divide his attention about equally in making history. But historians of the United States to-day find no permanent value in the statement that Dalkin's dog drew goodwife Dalkin out of the flood to her excited but cautious husband standing on the bank; or that a great light was seen hovering over Muddy River and strange voices were heard over the bay. Not even the trial of the governor for exceeding his authority has the interest of his famous definition of liberty in his defence of himself: "Liberty to do that only which is good, just and honest — maintained and exercised in a way of subjection to authority, instead of doing what is good in your own eyes."

It is in this speech that he rises out of and above the petty concerns of his neighborhood to something like statesmanship. So also his clear-mindedness may be discerned in many decisions of the general court over which he presided and in

His "History
of New
England."

whose documents his hand is visible. These, however, are entangled in a great multitude of grave observations about special providences for the elect and dire judgments upon the profane, about signs and wonders, monstrosities and superstitions, divisions and disorders in the church and commonwealth, with scandals and crimes in the community. And yet these sombre jottings have the creepy fascination that belongs to a ghost story, with the sad satisfaction that most of the record was true, or seemed true, to the sincere chronicler of a gruesome time and a gloomy people. The temptation to cite passage after passage is great, and the inclination to read on and on will be irresistible to any who once begin this vivid recital of colonial experiences and singular occurrences in and around Boston from 1630 to 1649. For example:—

1635. Jan. "The governour and his assistants met at Boston to consider about Mr. [Roger] Williams, for that they were credibly informed that notwithstanding the injunction laid upon him not to go about to draw others to his opinion he did use to entertain company in his house, and to preach to them; and it was agreed to send him into England by a ship then ready to depart. The reason was, because he had drawn above twenty persons to his opinion, and they were intended to erect a plantation about the Narragansett Bay from whence the infection would easily spread into these churches (the people being many of them, much taken with the apprehension of his godliness)."

1638. "At Providence, also, the devil was not idle. For whereas, at their first coming thither, Mr. Williams and the rest

did make an order that no man should be molested for his conscience, now men's wives, and children, and servants, claimed liberty hereby to go to all religious meetings, though never so often or though private, upon the week days ; and because one Verin refused to let his wife go to Mr. Williams so oft as she was called for, they required to have him censured. . . . Some were of the opinion that if Verin would not suffer his wife to have her liberty, the church should dispose her to some other man who would use her better."

1638. "A printing house was begun at Cambridge by one Daye. The first thing which was printed was the freeman's oath ; the next was an almanac made for New England by Mr. William Pierce, mariner ; the next was the Psalms newly turned into metre."

1641. "The sentence against Fairfield was, that he should be severely whipped at Boston and at Salem, and confined to Boston neck, upon pain of death if he went out, etc., he should have one nostril slit and seared at Boston, and the other at Salem, and to wear a halter about his neck visibly all his life, or to be whipped every time he was seen abroad without it, and to die if he attempted the like upon any person, and £40 to Mr. Humfrey."

1643. "About midnight, three men, coming in a boat to Boston, saw two lights arise out of the water near the north point of the town cove, in form like a man, and went at a small distance to the town, and so to the south point, and there vanished away. The like was seen by many a week after. A light like the moon arose about the N. E. point in Boston, and met another at Nottle's Island, where they closed in one, and then parted, divers times and so went over the hill and vanished. Sometimes they shot out flames and sparkles. About the same time a voice was heard upon the water between Boston and Dorchester, calling out in a most dreadful manner, boy, boy, come away, come away. It was heard by divers godly persons. About 14 days after the same voice in the same dreadful

manner was heard by others on the other side of the town towards Nottle's Island."

1643. "The 'Trial,' the first ship built in Boston, being about 160 tons was sent to Belboa with fish which she sold there at good rate, and arrived here laden with wine, fruit, oil, iron, wool; which was a great advantage to the country, and gave encouragement to trade."

1644. "About nine in the evening there fell a great flame of fire down in the water towards Pullen Point; it lighted the air far about: it was no lightening, for the sky was very clear."

1645. "There appeared about noon, upon the north side of the sun, a great part of a circle like a rainbow, with the horns reversed, and upon each side of the sun, east and west, a bright light. And about a month after that two suns at sunrising, the one continued close to the horizon, while the other (which was the true sun) arose about half an hour. At Ipswich there was a calf brought forth with one head, and three mouths, three noses and six eyes. What these prodigies portended the Lord only knows, which in due time he will manifest."

1646. "Mr. Lamberton, Mr. Grigson, and divers other godly persons, men and women, went from New Haven in the eleventh month last in a ship of 80 tons, laden with wheat for London; but the ship was never heard of after. The loss was very great, to the value of some 1000 pounds; but the loss of the persons was very deplorable. [Two years later.] There appeared over the harbor at New Haven, in the evening, the form of a keel of a ship with three masts, to which were suddenly added all the tackling and sails, and presently after, upon the top of the poop, a man standing with one hand akimbo under his left side, and in his right hand a sword stretched out towards the sea. Then from the side of the ship which was from the town arose a great smoke which covered all the ship, and in that smoke she vanished away; but some saw her keel sink into the water. This was seen by many, men and women, as it continued about a quarter of an hour." [Note the growth of this vision in the "Magnalia" I. 25.]

1648. "The synod met at Cambridge. Mr. Allen preached. It fell out, about the midst of his sermon, there came a snake into the seat where many elders sate behind the preacher. Divers elders shifted from it, but Mr. Thomson, one of the elders of Braintree, (a man of much faith) trode upon the head of it, until it was killed. This being so remarkable, and nothing falling out but by divine providence, it is out of doubt, the Lord discovered somewhat of his mind in it. The serpent is the devil ; the synod, the representative of the churches of Christ in New England. The devil had formerly and lately attempted their disturbance and dissolution ; but their faith in the seed of the woman overcame him and crushed his head."

1648. "At this court one Margaret Jones of Charlestown was indicted and found guilty of witchcraft, and hanged for it. The evidence was 1. that she was found to have such a malignant touch as many persons whom she stroked or touched were taken with deafness, or vomiting, or other violent pains or sickness ; 2. she practising physic, and her medicines being such things as by her own confession were harmless, as aniseed, liquors, etc., yet had extraordinary violent effects." [And four other "evidences"]. "Her behaviour at her trial was very intemperate, lying notoriously, and railing upon the jury and witnesses, and in like distemper she died. The same day and hour there was a very great tempest at Connecticut, which blew down many trees, etc."

1645. "Mr. Hopkins, the governour of Hartford upon Connecticut, came to Boston, and brought his wife with him (a godly young woman, and of special parts,) who was fallen into a sad infirmity, the loss of her understanding and reason, which had been growing upon her divers years, by occasion of her giving herself wholly to reading and writing, and had written many books. If she had attended to her household affairs, and such things as belong to women, and not gone out of her way and calling to meddle in such things as are proper for men, whose minds are stronger, etc., she had kept her wits, and might have improved them usefully and honorably in the place God had set her."

Edward Johnson's "Wonder-Working Providence" represents a third type of Puritan literature, defending New England against slanderous reports by malcontents, whose letters home had not described the agricultural, political, and religious conditions here as supremely beatific. The consequent indignation of the town clerk of Woburn moved him to tell the truth as he saw it, regardless of literary form. Being a train-band captain, he had a certain valiancy which pervaded his writing. It is full of military spirit and language, the opening chapters resembling an officer's harangue to his troops. The gathering and embarking of pilgrims was in his account the shipping of an armed host with "swords and rapiers and all other piercing weapons, with powder, bullets, arms of all sorts and all kinds of instruments of war."

Edward
Johnson.

"Every common soldier shall be as David, who slew the great Goliath, and his Davids shall be as the angels of the Lord, who slew 185,000 in the Assyrian army. Some of you shall have the battering and beating down, scaling, winning and wasting the overtopping towers of the hierarchy, therefore keep your weapons in continual readiness, seeing you are called to fight the battles of your Lord."

"And behold the worthies of *Christ* as they are boldly leading forth his Troopes into these *Westerne* Fields, marke them well Man by Man as they march, terrible as an Army with Banners, croud in all ye that long to see this glorious sight, see ther's their glorious King *Christ* on that white Horse, whose hooves like flint cast not only sparkes, but flames of fire in his pathes. Behold his Crown beset with Carbunkles, wherein the names of his whole Army are written. Behold his swiftness all you that have said, where is the promise of his coming? Listen a while, hear what his herauld proclaimes, *Babylon* is fallen, is fallen, both her Doctrine and Lordly rabble of Popes, Cardinalls, Lordly-

Bishops, Friers, Monks, Nuns, Jesuits, Deans, Proctors, Choristers, Bellows-blowers, Vergers, Sextons, Bel-ringers and all others who never had name in the Word of God. . . . And now behold the severall Regiments of these Souldiers of *Christ*, as they are shipped for this service in the *Westerne* World, a part thereof being come to the Towne & Port of *Southampton* in *England* that they might prosecute this design to the full."

If the Narragansetts and Pequots could have read and understood Captain Johnson's exhortation they would have fled as at the report of all the armies of Europe advancing upon them. Instead, the Indians were not so much in his mind as royalists and men who, like Winthrop, were not in entire sympathy with the general sentiment of the Bay colony. This ship carpenter and member of the general court was the voice of a separatist crying in the wilderness against a Babylon which he had left behind. He gets excited and his pen runs away with him in long, windy, stormy paragraphs against imaginary foes and evils magnified like spectres of the twilight. When he has got his host militant fairly out of England and settled down to the drudgery of clearing and planting he finds it difficult to descend from his rhetorical exaltation. Every common occurrence is a wonder-working Providence, usually in favor of the elect and against the non-elect, narrated in resounding phrase.

This may be partly accounted for by the fact that Johnson was an example of the Cromwellian soldier touched with the poetic afflatus. He could not always restrict himself to thundering prose. In his version of "The Lord's Great Deliverance of His New England People From the Floods of Errors That Were Bursting In Among Them" and

His "Wonder-Working Providence."

"The Cunning Policy of Satan" and "The Lord's Remarkable Providence Toward His Indeared Servants" and similar marvels, he relieves his overflowing transports by such lines as these, addressed to the "famous Hugh Peters:"

"With courage bold, Peters, a soldier stout,
In wilderness for Christ begins to war;
Much work he finds 'mongst people, yet holds out;
With fluent tongue he stops frantic jar."

And to "that gracious, sweet, heavenly-minded, soul-ravishing minister, Thomas Shepherd":

"No hungry hawk poor partridge to devour
More eager is, than prelate's Nimrod power
Thomas to hunt; my Shepherd sweet pursue
To sea's brink, but Christ saves his soul for you."

And to John Miller, preacher at Yarmouth:

"With courage bold Miller through seas doth venter.
To toyl it out in this great western waste,
Thy stature low, one object high doth center;
Higher than heaven thy faith on Christ is placed.
Alarm thou with silver trumpet sound
And tell the world Christ's armies are at hand."

In such martial and angular strains does the first occasional versifier of Massachusetts exemplify the high crusading spirit which brought the founders of the commonwealth across the water and upheld them amidst foes real and imaginary, carnal and spiritual, the Indians and the unorthodox. He had followers in the same zigzag paths of poetic violence, as we shall observe later, but none more zealous for the ruling idea of his time and place—an absolute theocracy in church and state maintained by sword and pen.

In the three writers here mentioned are reflected as many phases of thought freedom to which emigrants supposed the new land would be open. Morton
Diverse Views. found that his license could not be liberty in Endicott's neighborhood; Winthrop concluded that it was better to drift from his native middle ground toward the Plymouth holding, so long as it was tolerant; while Johnson stood for the final alliance of zeal with authority, and incidentally, of a trumpeting prose with an agonizing verse. But the elements of strength and sincerity are in both, with enough of entertainment to pay for reading his "Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Savior in New England," republished at Andover, 1867, and to be found, with the other volumes above mentioned, in most public libraries.

V

CONTROVERSY AND VERSE

THE large question of liberty was naturally the chief issue with those who had come to America with this as their uppermost thought. Freedom is a term so inclusive that it is not strange that a voluminous literature grew out of discussions as to its exact meaning, with no little friction between holders of diverse opinions, especially when these opinions were made matters of faith and conscience.

Interpreta-
tions of Free-
dom and
Liberty.

For example, the church and state idea was hard to uproot from the English mind. Three thousand miles of sea and sermons could not purge it from Winthrop's argonauts. It clung to them like the familiar words of the Prayer Book, which could not be thrown off with the surplice. In working toward a "church without a bishop and a state without a king" the traditions of a thousand years were continually hampering their progress, and those who lagged harassed the foremost. Hence a wordy war and a polemic literature, in which Roger Williams and John Cotton are pioneers and representatives of their age.

Williams in some things was an idealist amid surrounding realists. He moved from point to point, from rear to front, too fast for the comfort of his conservative neighbors. The momentum he acquired, increased by sundry kicks, sent him all the way from Salem into that Rhode Island where his friend Winthrop

Roger
Williams.

had remarked the industry of Satan. Then began the notable controversy about persecution for religious belief and the right to appropriate the lands of Indians, because they were pagans, by Puritans, because they were Christians.

Balancing testimony of friend and foe, Williams must have been an earnest but erratic spirit, somewhat unstable and flighty, gracious in manner, kindly in purpose, sincere and unshaken in his latest convictions — while they lasted. His writings are the outcome of this composite aggregate, in which the positive and the generous elements oftenest appear.

The "Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience" in the form of a Conference between Truth and

His "Bloody
Tenent."

Peace is his best and principal literary labor, setting forth the nature and sphere of civil government, and protesting against the "sad evil of civil magistrates dealing in matters of conscience and religion, as also of persecuting and hunting any for any matter merely spiritual and religious." Opposing this fashion of his day, he was banished to England, but escaped to Providence. The manner of his opposition is a striking contrast to the tone of his adversaries. Truth exclaims:—"In what dark corner of the world, sweet Peace, are we two met? How hath this present evil world banished me from all the coasts and quarters of it? And how hath the righteous God in judgment taken thee from the earth?" Then Peace answers:—"It is lamentably true that the foundations of the world have long been out of course; the gates of earth and hell have conspired together to intercept our joyful meeting and our holy kisses. With what a weary, tired wing have I flown over nations, kingdoms,

cities, towns to find out precious Truth!" Then follows the long arraignment of persecution cloaking itself with pretence of zeal, through three hundred and thirty pages. As literature it is not interesting, although the forbearing temper is always present, the biblical English is always clear, and the warmth and zest of the style a pleasing relief from the steely severity of orthodox foes.

But the principles which Williams propounds and advocates would have glorified any literary form in which they might have been cast. Their light and charity illumine and sweeten this gloomy and bitter controversy over half its disc, sometimes compelling a faint reflection from the other half. Their best result was to be seen in higher politics and religion rather than in letters, and in Rhode Island as an asylum for those who found it inconvenient to answer to the magistrate and the minister for their views of truth.

As for Roger himself, his ideal was always before him, leaving the Baptist station in its pursuit as he had left the Church of England, his soul still marching on, known till the last as a seeker for the true.

Of John Cotton, his opponent in this memorable controversy over the question which divides mediæval ecclesiasticism from modern, the best that can be said is, that he was an able champion of an ancient and established order — the intolerance which Puritans complained of in England and practised here. He was by no means the narrowest of his clan. Ingenious almost to sophistry, imaginative, mystical, and as joyous in temperament as was permissible in Boston in 1633, he occupied the enviable position of chief pastor and religious teacher in the future metropolis. He wrote with assured stroke, having

great repute in two Bostons and two Englands. Therefore he had no hesitation in taking up Williams's treatise, as he had already picked up a Newgate prisoner's advocacy of the same soul freedom. With easy condescension he entitles his reply, — "The Bloudy Tenent Washed and Made White in the Bloud of the Lambe," a most tortuous effort to wriggle out of the box in which he and his fellow saints had been put by the premature and ill-timed common sense of Roger Williams.

Here is an example of his logic and his charity: — "A civil magistrate ought not to draw out his civil sword against any seducers till he have used all good means for their conviction and thereby clearly manifested the bowels of tender commiseration and compassion toward them. But if after their continuance in obstinate rebellion against the light, he shall still walk toward them in soft and gentle commiseration, his softness and gentleness is excessive large to foxes and wolves: but his bowels are miserably straitened and hardened against the poor sheep and lambs of Christ, and his ministers of justice should assist his ministers of the gospel in the church state."

John Cotton's
"Bloudy
Tenent
Washed,"
etc.

So said Torquemada, inquisitor general, just before Columbus sailed from Palos, and recent occurrences seem to indicate that this spirit has never been wholly washed out of the land he discovered. At any rate, it is visible in the literature of this notable discussion on the Bay side. In Cotton and Hooker — however they might quarrel over hair lines and Anne Hutchinson — in Shepherd and Wheelwright, in Norton and Ward, in Wilson and Welde, and in all the four-and-twenty elders who sat on thrones judging the new Israel in New England, there

was a singular unanimity on the limitations of liberty, their writings being their witnesses.

Of the above, Nathaniel Ward, alias "The Simple Cobler of Agawam," is the most pronounced in his condemnation of those who would tolerate more than one form of religion. The maledictions of this lawyer-parson are a most interesting display of the resources of the English language, especially in the direction of foreign derivatives; for example:

Nathaniel
Ward.

"My heart naturally detested foure things: The standing of the Apocrypha in the Bible; Forrainers dwelling in my Countrey; Alchymized coines; Tolerations of divers Religions or of one religion in segregant shapes. . . . He that willingly assents to the last is either an Atheist, or an Heretique, or an Hypocrite. . . . I lived in a City where a Papist preached in one Church, a Lutheran in another, a Calvinist in a third; the Religion of that place was motly and meagre, their affections Leopard like. . . .

"Here I hold myself bound to set up a Beacon, to give warning of a new-sprung set of Phantasticks, which would perswade themselves and others, that they have discovered the Nor-west passage to Heaven. These wits of the game cry up and downe in corners of such bold ignotions of a new Gospel, new Christ, new Faith, and new gay-nothings, as trouble unsettled heads, querulous hearts, and not a little grieve the Spirit of God. I desire all good men may be saved from their Lunatick Creed by Infidelity; and rather beleeeve these torrid overtures will prove in time nothing but horrid raptures downe to the lowest hell, from which he that would be delivered, let him avoid these blasphemers, a late fry of croaking frogs, not to be indured in a Religious State, no, if it were possible not for an hour. . . . Take away the least *vericulum* out of the world and it unworlds it all, potentially, and may unravell the whole texture actually, if it be not conserved by an Arme of superordinary power. . . . How all Religions should enjoy their liberty,

Justice its due regularity, Civil cohabitation morall honesty, in one and the same Jurisdiction, is beyond the Artique of my comprehension. If the whole conclave of Hell can so compromise, exadverse, and diametricall contradictions, as to compolitize such a multimonstrous maufrey of heteroclytes and quicquidlibets quietly; I trust I may say with all humble reverence, they can doe more than the Senate of Heaven."

Later the dress of the women is as a red rag to this bull of Bashan and he remarks:

"I shall make bold for this once to borrow a little of their loose-tongued Liberty, and mispend a word or two upon their long-wasted but short-skirted patience. When I heare a nugiperous Gentledame inquire what Dresse the Queen is in this week: what the nudiustertian fashion of the Court; I meane the very newest: with egge to be in it in all haste, whatever it be; I look at her as the very gizzard of a trifle, the product of a quarter of a cypher, the epitome of nothing, fitter to be kickt, if shee were of a kickable substance, than either honour'd or humour'd. . . . It is beyond the ken of my understanding to conceive, how those women should have any true grace, or valuable vertue, that have so little wit, as to disfigure themselves with such exotic garbes, as not only dismantles their native lovely lustre, but transclouts them into gant bar-geese, ill-shapen-shotten-shell-fish, Egyptian Hieroglyphs, or at the best French flurts of the pastery, which a proper English woman should scorn with her heels. I can make myselfe sicke at any time, with comparing the dazzling splendor wherewith our Gentlewomen were embellished in some former habits, with the gut-foundered goosdom wherewith they are now surcingled and debauched. We have about five or six of them in our Colony: if I see any of them accidentally I cannot cleanse my phansie of them for a moneth after. I have been a solitary widdower almost twelve years, purposed lately to make a step over to my Native County for a yoke-fellow: but when I consider how women have tripe-wifed themselves with their cladments,

I have no heart to the voyage, least their nauseous shapes
and the Sea should work too sorely upon my stomach. I
speak sadly."

But this is not all that he says, as may be seen in the
"Simple Cbler of Agawam," whose simplicity is not in
words, albeit some of them are plain enough. The book
was written in 1645, and within a year the author re-
turned to England; possibly at the suggestion of the five
or six women above mentioned, if they heard of the
manuscript. Printed in London in 1647, it passed through
several editions and has been twice reprinted in Boston.

These writings may not be literature such as is now
read or written, but they were about all that was then
written or read in America. The age was theologic
and controversial. Leading minds in the prevalent ruts
of thinking were in the pulpit several days in the week.
Sermons and lectures were in the place of books and
newspapers, concerts and plays. An occasional utterance
was wafted on the breath of popular applause to a
London printing press and came back to be passed from
fireside to fireside. Sometimes a series of discourses
running through a year would be gathered up and called
a book. Eulogistic sermons on ministers and magistrates
departed in the true faith of the standing order constitute
the main deposit of literature in this carboniferous age.

Early and late, eighty-eight Boston preachers have
five volumes of commemoration, and eighty-three clerical
wives are similarly honored, as they ought to
have been for living with such husbands, them-

Eulogy.

selves tried with parochial misfortunes and the uprisings
of heresy. Twenty-five volumes are filled with the praise
of six hundred and forty-five lesser lights of New Eng-

land, classed "miscellaneous," comprising governors and judges, captains and ruling elders, Indian fighters and privateersmen. To find this body of scattered writings is an undertaking which few will attempt. Only the curious will be repaid for the search, but every librarian knows the dark and dusty corner where a bundle of samples may be found or where a bound volume reposes, dreaming of the pomp and splendor which attended an ordination or election some two hundred and sixty years ago. The glory of that Israel is departed, but a vision of it should be recalled to understand the literature of its day and generation.

As a companion piece to this body of polemic or eulogistic prose should be read the efforts at verse-making by some of the same writers. They began cautiously in a version of the Psalms and with the determination to be faithful to the original Hebrew, if not to poetic graces. Their success is shown by the following extracts from the Bay Psalm Book, the first volume of any consequence printed in America, Cambridge, 1640:

Psalmody.

"Remember, Lord, Edom's sons' words,
Unto the ground say they :
' It raze, it raze,' when it was
Jerusalem her day.

"Blessed shall he be that payeth thee,
Daughter of Babylon,
Which must be waste, that which thou hast
Rewarded us upon.

"How good and sweet, O see.
For brethren 't is to dwell
As one in unity !

It 's like choice oyl that fell
 The head upon ;
 That down the beard unto
 Beard of Aaron.

"My soul gave me a sudden twitch
 That made me nimbly slide,
 Like unto the chariots the which
 Abinidab did ride."

To get the full effect of these harmonious measures the reader should imagine them "deaconed" off two lines at a time and followed by the command, "Sing," and sung with the nasal drone which Scott has caricatured in "Peveril of the Peak." Still, without this accompaniment the standard of poetic art in 1640 will be apparent. It is surpassed only by the frigid or vengeful prose of the time. This in turn is matched by the threats of the warrior psalmist against the enemies of Israel, made more dire by the frightful translation of Eliot, Welde, and Mather, with an eye now and then to certain disturbers of their peace.

A woman, Anne Bradstreet, was the first person in Massachusetts to make poetry a business. Men had considered it a sly pastime and like the father of this poetess, Governor Dudley, carried rhymed epitaphs in their pockets as concealed weapons. The governor's own ran:—

"My shuttle 's shot, my race is run,
 My sun is set, my deed is done," etc.

But the daughter of one governor and the wife of another did not need to hide her candle after publishing the first volume of American poetry, entitled "The Tenth Muse," London, 1650. Her subjects are nature and man, the seasons and temperaments, the flesh and the spirit,

Anne
 Bradstreet.

four ancient monarchies, and contemplations. This is from "Winter":—

"December is my first, and now the sun
To the southward tropick swift his race doth run,
This month he 's housed in horned Capricorn;
From thence he 'gins to length the shortened morn.

"Cold frozen January next comes in,
Chilling the blood and shrinking up the skin;
The day much longer than it was before,
The cold not lessened, but augmented more."

Her "L'Envoi" is better, because truer:—

"My subject 's bare, my brain is bad,
Or better lines you would have had.
The first fell in so nat'rally,
I knew not how to pass it by.
The last, though bad, I could not mend,
Accept therefore of what is penned,
And all the faults that you shall spy
Shall at your feet for pardon cry."

Better still is this from her "Contemplations":—

"Man 's at the best a creature frail and vain,
In knowledge ignorant, in strength but weak:
Subject to sorrows, losses, sickness, pain,
Each storm his state, his mind, his body break
From some of these he never finds cessation,
But day or night, within, without, vexation,
Troubles from foes, from friends, from dearest, near'st relation.

"And yet this sinful creature, frail and vain,
This lump of wretchedness, of sin and sorrow,
This weather-beaten vessel wrect with pain,
Joyes not in hope of an eternal morrow:
Nor all his losses, crosses and vexation,
In weight, in frequency and long duration
Can make him groan for that divine Translation.

“O Time the fatal wrack of mortal things,
 That draws oblivion's curtain over kings,
 Their sumptuous monuments, men know them not,
 Their names without a Record, are forgot,
 Their parts, their ports, their pomp 's all laid in th' dust,
 Nor wit, nor gold, nor buildings 'scape time's rust;
 But he whose name is graved in the white stone
 Shall last and shine when all of these are gone.”

Michael Wigglesworth was the first male in New England to be responsible for prolonged verse. He desired to rescue poetry from the heathen associations of the classical school with Juno, Mars, Jove, and the rest of Olympus. Accordingly he composed a poem on the last judgment, under the title, “The Day of Doom,” suited to the religious temper of his generation. It was a great success, being read by more people in proportion to the inhabitants than any other book since its day. But what could be the literary taste or the standard of belief or the brightness of outlook in a community that read and reread and repeated by rote such stanzas as these?

Michael
Wiggles-
worth.

STANZA XXXVI.

“Fast by them stand at Christ's left hand,
 the Lion fierce and fell,
 The Dragon bold, that Serpent old,
 that hurried Souls to Hell.
 There also stand, under command,
 legions of Sprites unclean,
 And hellish Fiends, that are no friends
 to God, nor unto Men.”

XXXVII.

“With dismel chains, and strongest reins,
 like prisoners of Hell,
 They're held in place before Christ's face
 till He their Doom shall tell.

These void of tears, but filled with fears
 and dreadful expectation
 Of endless pains and scalding flames,
 stand waiting for Damnation."

XLIV.

"But as for those whom I have chose
 Salvation's heir to be,
 I underwent their punishment,
 and therefore set them free.
 I bore their grief, and their relief
 by suffering procured,
 That they of bliss and happiness
 might firmly be assured."

To those who pleaded honest lives it is answered in stanza

CIV.

"Again you thought and mainly wrought
 a name with men t' acquire ;
 Pride bare the Bell that made you swell
 and your own selves admire.
 Mean fruit it is, and vile I wiss,
 that springs from such a root ;
 Virtue divine and genuine
 wonts not from pride to shoot."

And to youth suggesting the shortness of their lives it is replied in stanza

CXI.

"Could you find time for vain pastime,
 for loose licentious mirth ?
 For fruitless toys and fading joys,
 that perish in the birth ?
 Had you good leisure for carnal Pleasure
 in days of health and youth ?
 And yet no space to seek God's face,
 and turn to him in truth ?"

Then follows a company of the misled, and of the fearful of persecution, and the non-elect — a difficult class to deal

with on prevailing theories, but the answer is consistent with the current creed as exploited in stanza

CXLIX.

“Whom God will save, such will he have
the means of life to use ;
Whom he 'll pass by shall choose to die ;
and ways of life refuse.
He that fore-sees and fore-decrees,
in wisdom ordered has,
That man's free-will, electing ill,
shall bring his Will to pass.”

The climax occurs when infants complain that they should be condemned for Adam's guilt.

“Whose sinful Fall hath split us all ;”

and they ask in stanza

CLXX.

“Canst thou deny us once to try,
or Grace to us tender,
When he finds grace before thy face
who was the chief offender ?”

But the case presents no difficulty to the father of eight infants by three wives, and he sings stanza

CLXXI.

“What you call old Adam's Fall,
and only his Trespass
You call amiss to call it his,
both his and yours it was” —

which is expounded in forty-eight lines, and then in stanza

CLXXX.

“You sinners are, and such a share as sinners may expect ;
Such you shall have, for I do save none but mine own elect ;
Yet to compare your sin with their who lived a longer time,
I do confess, yours is much less, though every sin 's a crime.
A crime it is, therefore, in bliss you may not hope to dwell,
But unto you I shall allow the easiest room in hell.”

And then to satisfy the logical and theological spirit of his age, he adds :

“ The glorious king thus answering, they cease, and plead no longer ;
Their consciences must needs confess, his reasons are the stronger ! ”

Poor children ! poorer parents ! poorest poet ! And worse than all, the age that made possible and loved this doggerel of doom.

To quote the words of Hawthorne once more : — “ Let us thank God for having given us such ancestors, and let each generation thank Him not less earnestly for being one step further from them in the march of ages.”

VI

SEWALL'S DIARY AND MATHER'S MAGNALIA

TOWARD the close of the first half of the colonial era the literary atmosphere grew extremely murky. The sulphurous smoke of Wigglesworth's "Dies Iræ" was making the days yellow and the nights lurid; nevertheless the orthodox snuffed it with mitigated and sanctified glee. Increase Mather's "Further Account of New England Witches" prolonged the grateful shudder which had attended their presence and their taking off in former years. Lest there should be too much diversion in frequent sermons and Thursday lectures — the only public entertainments of the period — Thomas Shepherd wrote his "Wine for Gospel Wantons." For dissipation of another kind — now getting too common — Increase Mather composed his "Woe to Drunkards." Even Roger Williams had to dig George Fox out of his burrows, and Cotton Mather closed the century with his "Mournful Decade," while in unconscious irony Samuel Sewall portrayed a dreary New England under the figure of "The New Heaven as It Appears to Those Who Stand Upon the New Earth." Meantime the worthy judge was writing with equal unconsciousness the one valuable end-of-the-century book, his diary.

A graduate of Harvard and tutor at twenty-one, Sewall, a young Englishman, twelve years in Boston, begins his entries on Dec. 3, 1673: "I read to the senior sophisters

the fourteenth chapter of Heerboord's Physick, etc." He continues his noting of events great and small for fifty-six years with a regularity which has been the despair of subsequent diarists. For example: March 23, "I had my hair cut." June 15, "Thomas Sargeant was whipped before all the scholars in the college library. Prayer was had before and after by the president." Nov. 11, "Morning proper fair, the weather exceedingly benign, but (to me) metaphoric, dark and portentous, some prodigy appearing in every corner of the skies." Dropping dates, abridging, and correcting the spelling: — "Mr. Willard preaches the lecture. Sixty persons killed at Quinebeck by barbarous Indians; John Holyday stands in the pillory for counterfeiting a lease; brewed my wife's groaning beer; quaker marched through the town crying Repent; artillery election day; Mr. West comes from Carolina for cure of dry gripes: Mr. Stoddard brings particulars of execution of Duke of Monmouth; carts come to town Christmas day; some observe the day, and are vexed that the body of the people profane it; blessed be God no authority yet to compel them to keep it; dreamed that our Lord came to Boston; admired his goodness and wisdom in coming here and spending some part of his short life here; I. Mather's 'Arrow Against Dancing' comes out; Eliakim falls ill of the measles; funeral of Lady Andros. Text, 'All flesh is grass;' Mr. Cotton Mather visits me; ride to Cambridge lecture; Captain Frary sees a soldier in the common with an Indian squaw; at the funeral of her husband, Deacon Eliot, I led the young widow and had scarf and gloves; bought a Greek testament; Major Brown has home his bride; corrected Sam for breach of the ninth command-

Sewall's
Diary.

ment, saying he had been at the writing school when he had not."

Sailing for England in November, 1698, he notes:—"My Erasmus was quite loosened out of the binding by the breaking of the water in the cabin. I put on a clean shirt this morn. Ate Simon Gates's goose. Dream much of my wife. Read the eleventh Hebrews and sang the forty-sixth Psalm." Getting ashore he visits Canterbury and St. Paul's cathedrals, Oxford and Cambridge, hears sermons, dines, buys commentaries, sees the sights in London, makes his will, and sails for Boston, where his personal history is continued with great and sometimes painful particularity. This is especially the case when anything is physically wrong with himself or his neighbors. Montaigne was not more unreserved in describing personal ailments. To bodily fortunes and misfortunes Sewall adds the elations and depressions of his soul and finally his heart: for as he gets past his sixty-eighth year, his second wife being three months dead, he makes the following entries: "Daughter Sewall acquaints Mme. Winthrop that if she is pleased to be within at 3 p. m. I would wait on her. She answered she would be at home. Had a pleasant discourse about seven single persons sitting in the fore seat. She propounded one and another for me, but none would do." The reason becomes apparent in a detailed narration of several visits to Mme. Winthrop herself, interspersed with letters and presents of sermons, in return for which he receives "a great deal of courtesy, wine, and marmalade." But one day "Mme. Winthrop's countenance was much changed and looked dark and lowering. I prayed there might be no more thunder and lightning. I should not sleep all night." Later: "I go

to Mme. Winthrop's having Dr. Sibb's 'Bowels' with me to read. She came in after a good while" and dismissed him coldly, "with no wine, as I can remember. The Lord will provide." He does provide. Widow Mary Gibbs is the next recipient of glazed almonds, cakes, paper, ink, wafers, sermons and proposals of marriage, and she accepts.

On the 29th of March, 1722, he makes this entry :

"Samuel Sewall and Mrs. Mary Gibbs were joined together in marriage by the Rev. Mr. William Cooper. Mr. Sewall prayed once.

Next Lord's day "sat with my wife in her Pue," and the day after brought her home to my House," and the next Sunday "introduced her to my Pue, and sat with her there," and the following Sabbath "Conducted my wife to the Fore-Seat, having been invited by the overseers."

One or two other entries show the way the judge and the world went on in the years from 1724.

April 5th. "The Ways are dry, and the Weather moderat, so that I comfortably goe to the solemn Assembly Forenoon and Afternoon : Hear my Son preach from the first Commandment. My Wife wore her new Gown of Sprig'd Persian." "May 1, After Lecture I heard the good News of Andrew Harradine and others rising up and subjugating Phillips the Pirat. . . . I went to the funeral of Widow Jane Bowdry, a courteous, well spoken Woman, and good Christian." "May 3. Pirats are brought in this day from Cape Anne." "Satterday, Set out for Ipswich in Mr. Hopkin's Calash, Madam Gill's White Horse; Got to Salem by fair Day-light."

Tuesday Aug. 11th, "Mr. Cooper tells me that the Corporation meet this day at Cambridge to chuse a President; fears they know not one another's minds. Went to Tom Cowell's Funeral." 22nd, "The 'Sheerness' comes up, and Capt. Harman with his Neridgwack Scalps at which there is great

Shouting and Triumph. The Lord help us to rejoice with Trembling."

On Aug. 2, "Madam Winthrop was buried. Will be much missed: After the Funeral went and wished Col. Fitch joy of his daughter's marriage with Mr. James Allen. Had good Bride-Cake, good Wine, Burgundy and Canary, good Beer, Oranges, Pears."

Thus the devout, kindly, hopeful, exact judge wrote in his lengthening diary for half a century, mixing his weddings and his funerals, his court sessions and Sunday sermons, his Indians and pirates, amassing material to fill three goodly volumes — the fifth, sixth and seventh in the Massachusetts Historical Society Collection. They contain the minute history of Samuel Sewall, tutor, librarian, preacher of one sermon two and a half hours long, member of the governor's council and judge of the colonial court. Of his official life he records less than of his personal experiences — bodily, social, and spiritual. Even about the famous witch trials, where he was one of the judges, he wrote but little, repenting afterward of his share in the widespread delusion of the age. As literature these records have less value than as history, but for interest to Americans they must always surpass the famous diaries of his English contemporaries, Evelyn and Pepys.

The name of Mather was a mighty one at the close of the seventeenth century. It began to ascend the religious and literary firmament in 1640, with Richard, and passed through the constellations of Increase, Cotton, and Samuel. In Cotton it blazed with midday splendor, and the "*Magnalia Christi Americana*" has not yet faded from sight, like most of the three hundred and eighty titles attributed to this champion bookmaker of a prolific tribe. In fact,

a good-sized family library was manufactured by successive Mathers in four generations.

The "Magnalia" is a landmark which may divide the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, reviewing as it does

Mather's
"Magnalia." New England history from its beginnings to 1698. As its title indicates, "mighty exploits" may be looked for in its sixteen hundred and sixty pages. The book itself was a heroic performance for a young man of thirty-four, though he was born old. None of his other works was of such consequence in his own esteem. The labor of two years was closed with a day of thanksgiving for ability to finish it: its passage to England was followed by fastings and prayers. There was another thanksgiving when, after five years, the printed folio arrived. The introductory laudations, epigrams, anagrams, and pindarics by its admirers show that it was an epoch-making volume. Its contents comprise the discovery of America and the settlement of New England; the lives of chief men in the colony, magistrates and divines; the history of Harvard college; the faith and order of the churches; wonderful providences and the wars of the Lord — that is, afflictions and disturbances, mercies and deliverances of New England. Any chapter reveals the characteristics and attainments of a man who was born in a library and fed upon books, who read Latin and Greek authors at ten and devoured big English volumes with two bites; whose memory was a vast cold storage for useful and useless knowledge, which he dispensed with lavish prodigality and garnished with the spoils of ancient classics. Old Burton himself is not a greater spendthrift of quotations, and his "Anatomy of Melancholy" might be the model in division and sub-

division after which the "Magnalia" was built. Boston in particular inspires his pen. In his "Bostonian Ebenezer" he says:—"Our town is now threescore and eight years old, and certainly it is time for us to set up our Ebenezer. . . Truly, there hath not one year passed over this town, 'Ab Urbe Condita,' upon the story whereof we might not make that note, our 'Ebenezer.' It is from thy watchful protection, O thou Keeper of Boston, who neither slumbers nor sleeps. . . . Old Boston, by name, was but St. Botolph's town. Thou, O Boston, shalt have but one protector in heaven. Rejoice in him alone and say, 'The Lord is my fortress and deliverer.' Old pagan towns were sometimes mighty solicitous to conceal the name of the particular God that they counted their protector. Ne ab hostibus Evocatus, alio commigraret. But I shall be far from doing my town any damage by publishing the name of its protector, for among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord." In this style he rolls on, his chariot wheels fluttering with scraps from Moses and the prophets, from the classics and the fathers, in Latin, in Greek, in Hebrew; while, towering majestic in wig and gown, he conducts a triumph through the streets of his beloved Boston with the plunder of all the ages and dispensations lumbering after him. No wonder that Danforth of Dorchester inscribed in this book:

"Art thou heaven's trumpet? sure by the archangel blown;
Tombs crack, dead start, saints rise, all seen and known,
And shine in constellation.
From ancient flames here's a new phoenix flown,
To show the world when Christ returns he'll not return alone."

Hero worship two hundred years ago ran in ecclesiastical and literary channels, and the height of its adulation

has not been since transcended. But Mather was equally generous with the worthies he embalmed in his sonorous prose—Thomas Hooker for instance:—“When Toxaris met with his countryman Anacharsis in Athens, he gave him this invitation, “Come along with me and I will show thee the wonders of Greece,” whereupon he showed him Solon as the person in whom there centred all the glories of that city or country. I shall now invite my reader to behold at once the wonders of New England and it is in one Thomas Hooker that he shall behold them, our celebrated Hooker, whom I may call, as Theodoret called Irenæus, the light of the western churches.”

Mather was pedantic, but it had been fashionable since King James' reign to embellish all literary fabrics with old jewels, and what would have become of Cotton Mather if he had not disgorged some of the treasures he was continually swallowing? In this, as in his discoursings on witchcraft, some allowance should be made for the age in which he lived. Its tastes and standards and beliefs were not ours; but, according to its own, Cotton Mather was one of the “illustrious providences,” and the principal man of his time, the perfected fruit of Puritanism—godly, learned, superstitious, narrow, fantastic. No other single writer has furnished so complete an account of the Puritan age, and the student of its history will find his interest divided between what Mather has to relate, the diversified manner of his narrations, and the variety of his acquisitions. For example, he published two hundred years ago “*La Religion Pura*,” an essay to convey religion into the Spanish isles, an early instance and prophecy of American expansiveness.

Out of so vast a repository as the “*Magnalia*” para-

graphs might be taken at random to illustrate the manner of this Behemoth of the mid-colonial era ; but perhaps nothing outside of his eulogies of contemporaries is more representative of the man and his style than his pronouncement upon the qualities of an historian and a writer. It certainly indicates the standard which many would have been proud to attain in his day.

“Reader ! I have done the part of an impartial historian, albeit not without all occasion perhaps, for the rule which a worthy writer, in his *Historica*, gives to every reader, *Historica legantur cum moderatione et venia*, etc. Polybius complains of those historians who always made the Carthaginians brave, or the Romans base, as their affection for their own party led them. I have endeavoured, with all good conscience to decline writing for a party, or doing like the dealer in History whom Lucian derides for always calling the captain of his own party an Achilles, but of the adverse party a Thersites : nor have I added unto the just provocations for complaint made by the Baron Maurier, that the greatest part of Histories are but so many panegyricks composed by interested hands, which elevate iniquity to the heavens, like Paternulus and Machiavel, who propose Tiberius Cæsar and Cæsar Borgia as examples fit for imitation, whereas true History would have exhibited them as horrid monsters — as very devils. ’Tis true I am not of the opinion that one cannot merit the name of an impartial historian except he write bare *matters of fact* without all *reflection* ; for I can tell where to find this given as the definition of History, — *Historia est rerum gestarum, cum laude aut vituperatione narratio* : and if I am not altogether a Tacitus, when *vertues* or *vices* occur to be matters of reflection as well as relation, I will, for my vindication appeal to Tacitus himself, whom Lipsius calls one of the prudentest (though Tertullian long before, counts him one of the *lyingest*) of them who have enriched the world with History. . . . But how can the lives of the commendable be written without commending them ; or, is that law

of History, given in one of the eminentest pieces of antiquity we now have in our hands, wholly antiquated, '*Maxime proprium est Historiæ, Laudem rerum egregie gestarum persequi?*' etc. etc."

And of style, especially of quotation, he says:

"These embellishments (of which yet I only — *Veniam pro laude peto*) are not the puerile spoils of Polyanthea's; but I should have asserted them to be as choice *flowers* as most that occur in ancient or modern writings, almost unavoidably putting themselves into the author's hand, while about his work, if those words of Ambrose had not a little frightened me, as well as they did Baronius, *Unumquemque Fallunt sua scripta*."

So far, — and it might be added, so little, of the pedantic scholar. But to see Cotton Mather in all his glory one should read his eulogy on some minister or magistrate of New England. Here is a brick from the mausoleum which he raised to Sir William Phipps:

"So obscure was the *original* of that memorable person, whose actions I am going to relate, that I must, in a way of writing like Plutarch, prepare my reader for the intended relation by first searching the archives of antiquity for a parallel. Now, because we will not parallel him with Eumenes, who though he were the son of a poor carrier, became a governour of mighty provinces; nor with Marius, whose mean parentage did not hinder his becoming a glorious defender of his country, and seven times the chief magistrate of the chiefest city in the universe; nor with Iphicrates, who became a successful and renowned general of a great people, though his father were a cobbler; nor with Dioclesian, the son of a poor scrivener; nor with Bonosus, the son of a poor schoolmaster, who yet came to sway the scepter of the Roman empire; nor, lastly, will I compare him to the more late example of Mazarini, who, though no gentleman by his extraction, and one so sorrowfully educated that he might have wrote *man* before he could write at all; yet ascended

unto that grandeur, in the memory of many yet living, as to umpire the most important affairs of Christendom : we will decline looking any further in the hemisphere of the world, and make the 'hue and cry' throughout the regions of America, the New World, which he that is becoming the subject of our history, by his nativity, belonged unto. . . . My reader being now satisfied that a person's being obscure in his original is not always a just prejudice to an expectation of considerable matters from him, I shall now inform him that this our Phipps was born Feb. 2, A. D. 1650, at a despicable plantation on the river of Kennebeck, and almost the furthest village of the eastern settlement of New England."

After such an array of the obscure-great to stand around the cradle of the infant Phipps, one can imagine to what heights his biographer would elevate him before and when he attained the dignity of knighthood for services rendered the crown. Accordingly through sixty-five large octavo pages he sets forth the exploits and virtues of this Massachusetts knight and closes with this panegyric strain :

"As the Cyprians buried their friends in *honey*, to whom they gave *gall* when they were born ; thus whatever *gall* might be given to this gentleman while he lived, I hope none will be so base as to put anything but *honey* into their language of him now after his decease. . . . The name of Sir William Phipps will be heard honourably mentioned in the trumpets of immortal fame, when the names of many that *antipathied* him will either be buried in eternal oblivion, without any *sacer vates* to preserve them or be remembered like that of Judas in the gospel, or Pilate in the creed, with eternal infamy."

And then as if this exalting prose were not enough he adds :

"But *Poetry* as well as *History* must pay its dues to him. If Cicero's poem intituled '*Quadrigæ*,' wherein he did with

poetical chariot extol the exploits of Cæsar in Britain to the very skies, were now extant in the world, I would have borrowed some *flights* of *that* at least, for the subject now to be adorned. But instead thereof, let the reader accept the following *Elegy* :

“ Rejoice Messieurs ; Netops rejoice
 Ye, Philistines, none will rejoice but you ;
 Our almanacs foretold a great eclipse
 This they foresaw not of our greater PHIPPS.”

And thus through eighty lines, ending :

“ Write now his epitaph, [New England] ’t will be thine own,
 Let it be this, a ‘ PUBLICK SPIRIT’S GONE.’
 Or name but Phipps ; more needs not be exprest ;
 Both Englands, and next *ages* tell the rest.”

One other phase of this remarkable intellect must suffice for those who cannot turn over the books of the “*Magnalia*” or some of the other three hundred and eighty-odd titles under which he wrote, more or less. When he launches into “*Preternatural Occurrences*” and the “*Invisible World*” his credulity is equalled only by his curious lore ; for example :—

“ In the year 1679 the house of William Morse, at Newbury, was infested with demons after a most horrid manner. *Bricks*, and *sticks* and *stones* were often by some invisible hand thrown at the house ; a cat was thrown at the woman of the house, and a *long staff* danced up and down in the chimney and when two persons laid it on the fire to burn it, it was as much as they were able to do with their joint strength to hold it there. An *iron crook* was violently by an invisible hand hurl’d about, a chest carry’d from one place to another, the keys of the family taken, ashes thrown into their suppers, shoes filled with ashes and coals,—yea while the man was at prayer with his household a *besom* gave him a blow on his head : while the man was writing his *inkhorn* was by the invisible hand snatched from him. He had his cap torn off his head, and he was pulled by

the hair, and pinched, and scratched and pricked with needles, etc., etc., [with thirteen other examples given at great length ending with this definition cited from *Wierius de Proestigiis Dæmonum* :] ‘A witch is a person that having the free use of reason doth knowingly and willingly seek and obtain of the devil, or any other god, besides the true God Jehovah, an *ability* to do or know strange things which he cannot by his own human abilities arrive unto.’ ”

Many such were said to be found in New England during the last half of the seventeenth century, as elsewhere, and nineteen supposed witches were executed, some with the approval of Cotton Mather.

There are other writings of this closing period of the century which are in the same vein — narrative, controversial and marvellous. Some, like Peter Folger, tried to revive the Pilgrim spirit; others, with William Hubbard and Matthew Mahew, wrestled with the still unsettled Indian problem, as Eliot did with their language and morals, translating for their improvement several books, like “Baxter’s Call to the Unconverted,” and writing a “Logic Primer for the Use of Indians”! Increase Mather wrote on “The Unlawfulness of Common Prayer Worship” and the “Divine Right of Infant Baptism.” George Keith found the churches of New England to be no true church, and James Allen defended the churches against the calumnies of George Keith.

Daniel Leeds wrote “News of a Trumpet Sounding in the Wilderness,” and Joshua Scottow “Old Men’s Tears for Their Own Declensions,” and John Mason “A Brief History of the Pequot War.” Then there is the usual flood of eulogies and elegies on the “much-to-be-deplored death of that never-to-be-forgotten person, Rev. Mr.

Nathaniel Collins," or Thomas Shepherd, or that "Pattern and Patron of Virtue, Anne Bradstreet."

The eulogy and epitaph of the century itself and its literature here might be extracted from such an elegy as B. Thompson wrote upon "the Very Reverend Samuel Whiting, who departed in the eighty-third year of his peregrination":

"Laetantius, by Cyrian, Basil too, the great ;
Quaint Jerom, Austin of the foremost seat,
With Ambrose, and more of the highest class,
In Christ's great school, with honor I let pass,
And humbly pay my debt to Whiting's ghost,
Of whom both Englands may with reason boast."

But then, the clerical factor in early American literature, and politics, too, had no reason to be unconscious of itself, and was seldom oppressed with diffidence.

VII

BOOKS OF TRAVEL

THE colonial era is conveniently divided into two periods by the beginning of the eighteenth century. There is, to be sure, no immediate change in literary forms or spirit, but this is true of most transitions. Crossing the
Century Line.

On one side of the intercentury line Samuel Willard displayed "The Peril of the Times" and William Southeby lifted up his "Testimony Against Prophaneness in Philadelphia." On the other, Cotton Mather drops "American Tears Upon the Ruins of the Greek Churches," and Increase, his father, deplores that "The Glory of the Lord Is Departing From New England," while John Hale shows "How Persons Guilty of Witchcraft May be Convicted" — a belated attempt to prolong an old agony, and this, too, in spite of Robert Calef's protest against the madness of the age in his "More Wonders of the Invisible World." In this he showed that there are other marvels that might be dragged into the service of fanaticism, and that those which had kindled the popular frenzy are as harmless as these. It was the outspoken, common sense rebuke of a layman and business man to the speculations and superstitions of ministers and magistrates, calling a halt to their destructive credulity. It threw these worthies into a fuming rage, in which they poured vials of wrath upon the author and burned his book with dire

maledictions in the yard of Harvard College, since he had reproved President Wadsworth, and Cotton Mather, and other ministers for their share in persecuting witches, so called.

To the President of Harvard College :

Reverend Sir : — After that dreadful and severe persecution of such a multitude of people, under the notion of witches, which, in the day thereof, was the sorest trial and affliction that ever befel this country ; and after many of the principal actors had declared their fears and jealousies, that they had greatly erred in those prosecutions ; and after a solemn day of fasting had been kept, and after most people were convinced of the evil of those actions ; at such a time as this it might have been expected that the ministers would make it their work to explain the scriptures to their people ; and from thence to have shown them the evil and danger of those false notions which in a blind zeal hurried them into those unwarrantable practices, and so to prevent a falling into the like for the future. But instead of this, for a minister of the gospel (pastor of the old meeting) to abet such notions, and to stir up the magistrates to such persecutions, and this without any cautions given, is what is truly amazing, and of most dangerous consequence. . . . And if blood shall be required of that watchman that seeth the sword coming, and gives not the needful warning, how much more of such as join with the enemy, to bring in the sword to destroy them over whom he was placed a watchman !”

And then under the caption “Matters of Fact” he gives such an account in a diary of events relating to the accusation and trial and execution of one and another victims of ministerial and magisterial zeal as an eye-witness might give who was not carried away with the general delusion. There is no more vivid picture of that unhappy time. For example :

"March 21 [1691]. Goodwife Cory was examined before the magistrates of Salem at the meeting house in the village, a throng of spectators being present to see the novelty. Mr. Noyes, one of the ministers of Salem, began with prayer. The number of afflicted were at that time about ten. These were most of them present at the examination, and did vehemently accuse her of afflicting them by biting, pinching, strangling, etc., and they said they did in their fits see her likeness coming to them, and bringing a book for them to sign. Mr. Hathorne, a magistrate of Salem [whom his descendant has immortalized] asked her 'Why she afflicted these children?'"

and then follows the rest of the examination, ending with remanding to prison of the accused.

Enough has been cited to show that one sensible man was not affected with that other malady of the time — a stilted affectation of style which, like the witchcraft delusion, was epidemic.

Notwithstanding the prevailing sombreness the opening of the eighteenth century is illuminated by a bar of light shot through the general gloom. Colonists began to get beyond the confines of their native towns, and to see other people than their next neighbors. Charles Wolley writes "A Two Years' Journal in New York," and Sarah Kemble Knight records her adventures during a journey on horseback from Boston to New Haven, New York, and returning. George Keith writes "A Journal of Travels in North America," and Rev. John Williams an account of his forced march to Canada with Indian captors and his subsequent ransom under the scriptural title of "The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion," that is, to Deerfield, Massachusetts. Thus in one way and another a new feature is added to the literature that had been growing

Colonists
make
Excursions.

up around the meeting-house and the fireside, the pillory and the gallows. This last book, for instance, full of suffering on a bloodstained trail over snow and ice to Montreal is, nevertheless, not without its shrewd observation of things and men, which must have been a revelation to those who had not been personally conducted by savages into a Roman Catholic country. The heroism with which the unwilling pilgrims bore the distress of the journey and their devout trust in Providence are equalled by the steadfastness with which they resisted all efforts to make them attend mass, or to sign themselves with the sign of the cross. It was an opportunity to show what Puritanism could do and dare under fire, as it had already shown what it would do on the throne. But incidentally its views were enlarged by going into the Frenchman's country and discovering that "papisty" could at least be polite and kindhearted upon occasion.

Mme. Knight in her excursion along shore did not always find the same qualities among her countrymen.

To New
York.

Her itinerary is a revelation of country and town life in four colonies. It contains graphic accounts of bumpkin guides, pork and cabbage dinners, a bed next the bar-room, river fording, country stores and their customers, rigid laws against kissing on Sunday, hard fare at a French inn, the charms of a New York vendue and of the people who lived in tiled houses, hospitable and sociable, civil and courteous, and who atoned for not keeping the sabbath with Boston strictness by exact dealing in business. Doubtless her account was part of a liberal education to the Bostonese "who came flocking in to hear the story of my transactions and travails, I having this

day been five months from home." It may now be read in the fair copy printed in Albany in 1865.

Charles Wolley was another for whom New York had numerous attractions, clergyman of the English church though he was, and finding "ministers scarce and religions many." While he observes the shy and uncharitable spirit of these preachers, "as if Luther and Calvin had bequeathed and entailed their virulent and uncharitable spirit upon them, and not interchanging visits for five years together," still he must acknowledge their great fluency in speaking Latin on an occasion when he got them together and forbade the use of any other tongue. Of the New York townspeople he remarks that their principal diversion is "aurigation — i. e., riding about in wagons, which is allowed by physicians to be a very healthful exercise" — still followed by their descendants. Mentioning other pastimes, he concludes that "It's a place so very inviting that our gentry, merchants, and clergy (especially such as have the natural stamina of a consumptive propagation in them or an hypochondriacal consumption) flock there for self-preservation." Such a sanatorium was the Dutch-English metropolis in 1701.

George Keith, a missionary sent out by the English church, was about as much of an American as John Smith, staying here two years, travelling from New Hampshire to North Carolina, and writing an account of his professional tournaments with Quakers and others. At the end, however, he adds: "In all places where we travelled and preached we found the people generally well affected to the doctrine we preached among them, and they did generally join with us in the liturgy of the Church as we had occasion to use it."

Three days before the incoming of the eighteenth century John Lawson, gent. and surveyor general of North Carolina, started on a thousand-mile journey among Indian tribes, of which he wrote and published a sprightly account. In it he attributes the lack of good reports by travellers in this country to the fact that they are for the most part "persons of the meaner sort and generally of a very slender education, incapable of giving any reasonable account of curiosities worthy a nice observation." With such tourists from England — a race not yet extinct — he contrasts the learned observers sent out by the king of France and their journals of travel from Canada to the Mississippi. Then, dedicating his work to three noblemen and the rest of the lords proprietors, he begins his story at Charleston, whence he voyages with nine companions by sea and river, encountering game and mosquitoes, savages with rum and without it, wild cattle and hogs very lean, contrary currents and cold weather, plenty of furs and good bargains. The aboriginal customs particularly interest him, especially the silence of the women, upon which he remarks: "Would some of our European daughters of thunder set these Indians for a pattern." Upon the subject of their cookery he does not wax so eloquent. Among the "insects" of North Carolina he mentions alligators, rattlesnakes, tortoise, and terrapin, giving a vivid description of these and twenty other "insects," including vipers, scorpions, and frogs. His lists of fish and fowl are more appetizing. Altogether his view of the country and its inhabitants is remarkably cheerful and his portrayals unreserved, conveying the impression that the Carolina savages were pleasanter fellows to meet than

And in the
South.

their Iroquois cousins. But this was before they burnt him at the stake in 1712. John Lawson certainly justified his claim to a place beside the French narrators and to the title of gentleman.

Another "gent.," Ebenezer Cook by name, in 1708 published "The Sot Weed Factor; or, a Voyage to Maryland, a Satyr," in burlesque verse. It is another impression which colonial life made upon Englishmen, this time upon one who was outwitted in a tobacco bargain. Still, these Hudibrastic lines must have been inspired by something more than the fancy of a man who could write such stuff. As in Connecticut, so in Maryland, colonial modes of living must have been crude amidst great abundance, and in the latter province amidst a flood of strong waters. Justice, too, was on the side of the home-born. Therefore this satire was on the side of the swindled stranger, who flings back to the eastern shore the following adieu:

" May cannibals transported o'er the sea
Prey on these slaves, as they have done on me;
May never merchants' trading sail explore
This cruel, this inhospitable shore,
But left abandon'd by the world to starve,
May they sustain the fate they well deserve "

and other calamities fit for Americans who were already developing a commercial shrewdness which was to give the British trader great uneasiness in the immediate future.

It was by the native traveller that the colonies were coming to know each other preparatory to federation and ultimate union. And the foreign traveller by his "impressions" published in London was contributing to the same result in another way. One such traveller became an indirect contributor to our literature.

John Oldmixon, historian and pamphleteer, was publishing his "British Empire in America" when Robert Beverly of Virginia, being in London in 1703, saw advance sheets containing an account of Virginia and Carolina. Reading these, he discovered so many misstatements that he undertook to write an account of his own country, "because it had been so misrepresented to the common people of England." He then specifies wherein the English author had blundered. It is consoling to note that colonial geography was as great a puzzle to the native Briton as that of "the States" is to-day; as when Oldmixon remarks that the Indians at the head of Chesapeake Bay pass the frontier of Virginia in going to New York, and that the James river lies southward of that bay. It is a source of wonder to the Englishman — and of amusement to the American — "what became of the camels brought to Virginia by Guinea ships," of which Beverly had never heard. These and a score of similar errors the American traveller sums up with the remark: "How unfaithful and fruitless must such a historian be who can upon guesswork introduce such falsities for truth and bottom them upon such bold assertions!" An exclamation which to this day occasionally goes up from the American reader of English notes of travel through the United States — by way of the Canadian Pacific railway. However, these ancient geographical and other slips may be pardoned for the sake of the history of Virginia, which they provoked Beverly to write.

A hundred years had passed since John Smith sent his advertisement of the country and its resources to the London company. Beverly undertook to give an account of the progress the colony had made

in the century. He becomes the first writer of its natural and political history. He tells again the story of its settlement, recounts the coming and going of royal governors, the arrival of Lord Baltimore in Maryland, the Berkeley and Bacon scrimmage, the spread of religious sectaries, the restraint put upon commerce and tobacco-raising, the taxing of lawyers and schoolmasters, wine and liquors, the internal disorders, the projecting of a college to teach languages, divinity, and natural philosophy — all seasoned with spicy details of the prolific fertility of the land, of cornering pirates, and of the “natural conveniences of Virginia before the English went thither,” its waters and soils and their products, animal, mineral, and vegetable, fish, fowl, and noble game. Finally, in the third book, he discourses upon the never-failing topic of the English colonist — the Indians, their religion, laws, and customs, in war and in peace, illustrated by rude cuts which leave nothing for the imagination, because appended explanations tell what each figure represents. For example, “This is a man and his wife at dinner. Figure 1 is a pot boiling with hominy and fish; 2 is a bowl of corn, which they gather up in their fingers to feed themselves; 3 is the tomahawk, which he lays by at dinner.” But this explicitness is of a piece with all the book — the honest endeavor of a Virginian in London to correct misapprehensions about his native country. His book is full of the subject, like himself. He knows what he is talking about; the other man did not. Accordingly he will set him and all England right on a matter where there was great liability to be wrong. It was no fault of his if they continued to blunder.

VIII

ESSAYS, NEWSPAPERS, AND ALMANACS

IN the first quarter of the eighteenth century old literary patterns were melting to be cast into new moulds. Some of them were slow to sink and stubbornly kept their antique shape amidst the general fusion. Others floated in sight as dross and slag after their substance was gone.

The most notable example of persistent survival of old-time artificiality was the ceaseless production of the Mathers, ending, apparently, only with their lives. Increase Mather had just turned out his "Elijah's Mantle" and Cotton his "Impressions Produced by Earthquakes" when they both were translated to another world, having discoursed on most terrestrial and many celestial subjects here. In verse Nicholas Noyes had attained the heights of the fantastic in appropriate elegies on contemporary worthies like John Higginson, who, he sang:

"For rich array cared not a fig,
And wore Elisha's periwig,
Before he went among the dead
He children's children's children had."

Or like Joseph Green:

"In God's house we late did see
A Green and growing olive tree.
His Master's work he did so ply,
He did but just get time to die."

These masters of quibbling contortion had admirers and imitators, who may all be dismissed with other antique

spinning wheels of verse and prose to the storeroom of colonial curiosities.

A new style came in with Jeremiah Dummer. The elders had great hopes of him in the pulpit, but he was too fine-spun to follow their traditions. The ideals of the seventeenth century were getting stale and its idols shopworn. The spirit of a new era was in the air outside the unventilated meeting-house, and the promising graduate of Harvard in the class of '99, two centuries ago, got a sniff of it. He did his best to satisfy a Boston congregation, but an essay is not a sermon. Yet the essay had arrived and was henceforward to share attention with the sermon. The first number of the "Spectator" was about to be printed, and the youthful prodigy who had disappointed critical listeners found himself in London in time to read Addison's account of his own life in the issue of March 1, 1710. Henceforth, as agent of Massachusetts, his associations were with its politics rather than its theology, and in his "Letter to a Noble Lord," concerning the late expedition to Canada, he makes the transition from divinity to a statesmanship which was soon to become conspicuous in America. To this he afterward contributed his "Defense of New England Charters," a forerunner of the state papers which preceded the Declaration of Independence. It was reprinted thirty-eight years later as applicable to colonial issues in the days of the pre-revolution controversy with Great Britain. All that need be said of it here is that its style shows the author's acquaintance with contemporary writings in England, and that he was willing to be taught by them. His predecessors had not been. In separatist isolation they were a law and a pattern unto themselves

and each other through all the preceding century. With one or two exceptions they turned their backs upon polite literature and set their faces as a flint against Tudor and Stuart belles-lettres. Mosaic in their law, they became Hebraic in their literature. When they laid the foundations of empire in the stern righteousness of the Pentateuch they did well; but to build a literature upon the archaic style of the law and the prophets was to go back twenty-five centuries. It is by no means necessary to confound these two achievements or to say that they won equal distinction in theocratic politics and in letters, or that their books will live except as curiosities, and as they may belong to the building of a nation. No doubt this last was a higher occupation than creating an immortal literature, but the one process is not the other, nor often coincident with the other. Good literature may follow good government afar. It began to appear early in the eighteenth century, and this Jeremiah Dummer was the prophet of its coming, if not its pioneer. His associations in London may not have been fortunate, but he must have been as open to literary influences from the works of Dryden and Swift, Addison and Steele, as to social and political sway by Lord Bolingbroke and the Tories.

In any case what he wrote is a pleasant contrast to contemporary writings here, of which Cotton Mather's "Essays to Do Good" is likely to survive the longest, since Benjamin Franklin acknowledged his indebtedness to it. So Benjamin Wadsworth's "Dissuasion from Tavern Hunting and Excessive Drinking," written for the benefit of Harvard students, may still have its value for their successors and for other students by reason of its precepts rather than for its literary worth.

A mighty man in his day was John Wise, the Ipswich parson who scented prelacy in the slightest suggestion of Presbyterianism, and smashed a conspiracy against church independency with a single blow of his Thor hammer under the mild title of "The Churches' Quarrel Exposed." It is a fine example of surviving Puritan polemics, containing strong arguments enforced by strong words.

Cotton Mather and others had made a series of "proposals" which squinted away from the independency of each congregation in ordering its own affairs and pronouncing upon its own minister, who in theory at least was to be chosen from its own ranks. To one of these proposals, that an association of ministers should be the judge of a candidate's fitness, after hearing him preach, this defender of the primitive faith replies as follows, after a preliminary compliment to academical learning:

"What can a sermon do at deciding this question? for that the most sensible and valuable, who are usually the most humble and tender are liable by this stupendous examination, to be baffled by their own temerity, and quite dashed out of countenance by their own fear. Alas! upon their first entrance upon the stage, to appear in so august and awful a presence, as having in their minds the resemblance of their going into the Spanish Inquisition, rather than dwelling amongst the softer measures of the gospel. Luther himself hardly ever got over something of a panic fear attending him through the course of his ministry; and, indeed, men of the quickest senses are most liable to these paroxysms. Then surely to put our tyros to this test, which may daunt and dispirit the greatest hero, is noways proportionable. . . . Indeed the bold and brazen man who can make a greater figure with half the stock by many shirking tricks and dissembling artifices, defended and supported with

confidence and delivery, may obtain the *euge juvenis* that they noways deserve. To conclude, as the proverb is, 'one swallow makes not the spring.' So in this trial, one good or mean sermon cannot determine the man, or umpire his case."

Stronger language is used when the peril to the ancient order appears imminent. The associations of the clergy, he says, began in their meeting to pray for deliverance from Indian depredations and other afflictions, but these meetings came to be more and more like ecclesiastical conventions with incidental ambitions for office, and he breaks out:

"Alas! Alas! empire and supreme rule is a glorious thing! Now this conceit did begin pretty much to predominate, especially in some gentlemen that were inclined to Presbyterian principles, who improving their advantages of sense and influence to intrigue others of a lower set of intellectuals, brought the business so near to a conclusion as you find it in this proposal. When they had thus far advanced and ripened their design, out comes these proposals, like Aaron's golden calf, the fifth day of November, 1705."

He remembers that this is the anniversary of the "Gunpowder-treason day," and exclaims, "Why, gentlemen! have you forgot it?—a fatal day to traitors." And the golden calf reminds him of

"that great and terrible beast with seven heads and ten horns, which was nothing else a few ages ago but just such another calf as this is . . . now grown to be such a mad, furious, and wild bull that there is scarce a potentate in the world that dare take this beast by the horns when he begins to bounce and bellow. Therefore to conclude, and infer, *obsta principiis!* It is wisdom to nip such growths in the bud, and keep down by early slaughter such a breed of cattle."

It is said that this "excoriating satire recalled the churches to the first principles of Congregationalism, and reseated them on their ancient platform more firmly than ever for the next sixty years." It was republished by the Congregational Board of Publication, Boston, 1860.

It is a comment on the joyousness of our ancestors' childhood that the precocious Hannah Hill, an authoress at the age of eleven, wrote a "Legacy for Children: Last Expressions and Dying Words." Fortunately that very year "The Origin of the Whalebone Petticoat" appeared, a satire by a writer who did not dare to affix his name to such a piece of unseemly mirth. Moreover, it was not only a grave age, but a warlike one. The fruitful Mather was writing his second "Luctuosum, or Mournful Decade" on the recent Indian wars, while Thomas Church recorded "Entertaining Passages Relating to Philip's War," — such as chopping off captives' heads and bringing them home. Thus, with solemn mirth and glad grimness, that generation fought and wrote. It was a day when Mather knocked the rhymed ends off the Psalmody and made it still more Hebraic by blank verse. He held, with some later critics, that rhyme is a cheap device, not essential to true poetry, a conclusion to which he might have been driven by some of the discordant endings in the Bay Psalm Book. Relief from its droning misery came to children — on week days only — in the publication of "Mother Goose's Melodies" in 1719, and for grown-ups once a week in the "Boston Gazette" after Dec. 21 of that year, and in the "Weekly Mercury" the next day in Philadelphia.

Of these papers the "Boston News Letter" had for fifteen years been the only predecessor in the country.

Starting with the beginning of the century, it had marked the entry of secularism into a theological-literary atmosphere. Now, after fifteen years, there were signs of permanence and growth for printed journalism. But the indications of its future attainment were few and feeble in the leaflets which contained little news, and old at that. Even then these eight-by-twelve half sheets were chimeras dire to legislatures and magistrates, as containing "reflections of a very high nature." Consequently, after the first number of "Public Occurrences" in 1690 no other paper appeared until 1704. Eighteen years after this James Franklin's "Courant" was put under the censorship of the provincial secretary for treating with contempt religion and government. That it took the side of ignorant prejudice in the inoculation controversy is another evidence of its antagonism to the better sentiment of the age. It behaved more wisely under the management of James' younger and shrewder brother, Benjamin, who became the forefather of American editors, publishers, and printers. In his own day he saw thirty-seven weekly newspapers established before the Revolution. These increased to two hundred by the end of the century, including several dailies.

Next to the newspaper and outnumbering its circulation was the almanac. In these days of calendars on every wall it is not easy to understand the importance of the almanac in colonial households. With the Bible it constituted the entire library of many families. Successive numbers hung from a string by the chimney or ranked by years and generations on cupboard shelves. If much perusal is the test of literature, no ancient or modern classic could compete success-

Early
Newspapers.

The
Almanac.

fully with these mixtures of dates and mystic hieroglyphs, figures and facts, wit and wisdom, scraps of verse and selected prose. Their range was from the barnyard to the stars, from Rabelais to Solomon. They brought to the farmer and the fisherman, the mason and the carpenter, chips from a world-wide literature. The almanac was their cyclopedia, gazetteer, and literary storehouse. Little fault was to be found with it as far as it went. American almanacs were purged of the astrological nonsense which had made foreign year-books attractive since Mohammed's hegira. Still there were things which the colonist would not undertake in the wane of the moon or when the sign was below the heart. But he would read his almanac on every day of the year — Sundays excepted. In this he had the example of kings, queens, and courtiers, whose daily companion was the expensive calendar of Purbeck or Regiomontanus as far back as Columbus' day, when better reading was scarce and readers few. This was somewhat the case when in 1725 Nathaniel Ames published his astronomical diary, and when the Franklin brothers followed him with the Rhode Island and Philadelphia imitations a little later. In an almanac compiled by "Benjamin West, Philomath, in Providence 1765, printed and sold by William Goddard, at the Printing Office near the Great Bridge," there is the following "Advertisement" looking toward the economics of literature and home production :

"As the present embarrassed condition of the Trade of these Northern Colonies renders it utterly impossible for us to pay for the large Quantities of Goods that are annually imported from Great Britain, it is reasonable to suppose, that every Attempt to lessen the Demand for such Goods, by establishing

Manufactories amongst ourselves, for the making of those Things which are really beneficial, must meet with the Approbation and Encouragement of all who wish well to this country. Amongst many laudable Endeavours in the different Provinces, for the purpose aforesaid, a spirited Effort is now actually making in the Town of Providence, for carrying on a Paper Manufactory, a spacious Mill being already built, and will be speedily set to work, which, if it can obtain a proper Supply of Linen Rags, old Sail Cloth, and Junk, those being the principal Articles necessary for making that useful Commodity, it's Utility to this Part of the Country will be soon demonstrated by a Saving of some Thousand Dollars, that are annually sunk to us in the Pockets of the European Merchants. Nothing but the Industry and Frugality of this and the neighboring Colonies, in preserving and furnishing the Mill with the above Articles, can ensure its Success, and as it is a Matter worthy of Attention, it is hoped that every Family will be so frugal and industrious as to promote it in that Manner by which they will soon experience the Propriety of that old Proverb, *A Penny saved is a Penny got.*"

"Poor Richard" deserves great praise for giving colonists a nibble at Swift, Defoe, Steele, Bacon, and others whose entire works would have met the fate of taxed tea in New England ports of entry. Small doses, administered with proverbs and predictions, accustomed the provincial taste to contemporary classics and prepared the way for a broader cultivation and more catholic literary sympathies. The camel's nose was getting under the tent and his body was sure to follow, but with camel slowness. When thousands were tasting samples of respectable literature, whose total sum was only six weeks away by trading packet, why did invoices of books run in titles of mediæval sound far on toward the nineteenth century? Silks and spices, teas and wines came here in abundance; but literature was homespun or worse,

as the inventories and book lists of the first half of the eighteenth century show.

Accordingly the day of the small almanac is not to be despised. It was not much in itself, but it baited a starved people on to a feast which they had been accustomed to regard as Belshazzar's banquet, if perchance they had heard of it at all. With the coming of the almanac, then, the hope of American letters dawned, for the author would write as he read. The grist that the colonist ground was according to the grain he put into the hopper. In the north it had been yellow maize, and white in the south; coarse meal and hominy in both, possibly rye and Indian at best. A hundred years later he will buy wheat, raise it and make the finest flour. His gritty polemics and strong controversy and crude history will be among the curiosities of his colonial life when the American of the next century reads world-wide literature and sells his own literary products in the markets of the world. But the time is not yet. The year that the first almanac comes out Josiah Dwight sends forth his "Essay to Silence the Outcry Against Regular Singing" and Samuel Willard his "Two Hundred and Fifty Lectures on the Shorter Catechism" and an anonymous writer his "Hoop Petticoats Arraigned and Condemned by the Light of Nature and the Law of God." John Barnard will try to make a little sunburst with his "Adventures of Philip Ashton" and "An Account of Nicholas Merrit's Escape From the Pirates," and Roger Wolcott will perpetrate his "Poetical Meditations or Improvement of Some Vacant Hours." Let us close the period by singing with the poet one of his stanzas on "A Wounded Spirit Who Can Bear":

As a Literature Primer.

"The fire within my conscience
Is grown so fervent and intense
I cannot long its force endure,
But rather shall my end procure :
Grisly death's pale image lies
On my ghastly, piercing eyes.
My hands, made for my life's defence,
Are ready to do violence
Unto my life. And send me hence
Unto that awful residence.
There to be filled with that despair
Of which the incipations are
A wounded spirit none can bear."

And all must agree with this great governor of Connecticut in the middle of the last century when he concludes that

"These very meditations are
Quite unsupportable to bear."

IX

TRANSITION — EDWARDS AND FRANKLIN

Two distinguished Americans were contemporary writers in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, one of whom represented the culmination of the old intellectual life and the other the beginning of a new one.

Jonathan Edwards was the result of four generations of philosophic theology. He illustrated what it could produce under New England conditions. It had turned out the "Simple Cocker of Agawam" ^{Jonathan Edwards.} and the Mather dynasty. Then it seized upon a modest, serene, lovable man and a mighty intellect. In the transition already begun he who might have helped it on was anchored back to the predestinarianism and fatalism of Calvin; he prolonged the echo of its thunders for years after its fluid fires had ceased to rive and sear the souls of men. In the pulpit he would hold his hearers over the burning pit, as in the famous Enfield sermon, by a spider's thread until their groans disturbed his discourse, when he would request them to keep quiet until he had finished. To call him an eminent vivisection of the spiritual body is to apply an opprobrious epithet which this humane man does not deserve. Yet he was possessed of the fallacy, old as Egypt, that one creature has a right to torture another in the interest of religion or science.

Edwards was more admirable in the field of speculative

and natural philosophy, where he attained to a European reputation. His great work on the Freedom of the Will, in which he held that the will is not free, is his memorial forever. As literature, there is seen in it both the cause and the illustration of a hard and dismal style. To explain the difference between "doing what we will" and "willing what we will to do" is not productive of much beyond the intricacies, refinements, and convolutions of thought with corresponding twistings, turnings, and quibblings of expression. Even his sermons approach nearer to sterling qualities of speech. They are very direct in places. "The devil is waiting, the fire is ready, the furnace is hot, the flames do rage and glow. When God lets go you will drop." There is no vagueness here. He was also free from the ungainly affectations and cumbrous pedantry of a former age and its conventional artificiality. If he had followed the liberal lead of his predecessors in the Northampton church, and had not inquired too strictly about certain books of fiction which his young parishioners were reading, he would not have been dismissed to the Stockbridge Indians and eventually advanced to the presidency of Princeton college. But it was in his exile that he wrote the monumental treatise which has outlasted the labors of his parochial years. His son and biographer best sums up his literary attainments when he says: "As to elegance of composition, it is well known that the author did not make that his chief study. However, his writings have, it seems, that solid merit which has produced both to themselves and him a considerable reputation in the world, and with many an high esteem."

A paragraph or two abridged from the topic "What

Determines the Will," may illustrate the style which persists throughout this treatise:—

"The choice of the mind never departs from that which, at that time, appears most agreeable and pleasing. If the immediate objects of the will are a man's own actions, then those actions which appear most agreeable to him he wills. If it be now most agreeable to him to walk, all things considered, then he now wills to walk. There is scarcely a plainer and more universal dictate of the sense and experience of mankind, than that, when men act voluntarily, and do what they please, then they do what suits them best, or what is most *agreeable to them*.

"It appears from these things, that in some sense, *the will always follows the last dictate of the understanding*, including the whole faculty of perception and apprehension, and not merely what is called *reason* or *judgment*. Such a dictate of reason is quite a different matter from things now appearing most *agreeable*. . . .

"These things which I have said, may, I hope, serve, in some measure to confirm the position I laid down in the beginning of this section, viz., That the Will is always determined by the strongest motive, etc., etc."

He is generally clear in this once famous treatise, whose subject now is chiefly interesting to metaphysicians, but formerly it furnished weapons for many a fireside debate between disputatious neighbors.

For more direct speech some of his sermons may be referred to. Writers on literature have been complained of for always citing the Enfield sermon; and attention is called to others of a more hopeful and cheerful tone. But it is to be feared that for illustrations of crisp and pointed sentences, as distinguished from exact amplifications of complex thought, one will find the best examples in the discourses about a place with which Edwards had no

sympathy; as in the sermon on "The Torments of the Wicked in Hell, no Occasion of Grief to the Saints in Heaven." But he preached many sermons of lighter complexion.

To be fair, let this sample be taken from a theme of neutral tint, — "The Preciousness of Time." He pointedly and pertinently says: —

"Consider, therefore, what you have done with your past time. You are not now beginning your time, but a great deal is past and gone; and all the wit, and power, and treasure of the universe cannot recover it. . . . Your sun is past the meridian, and perhaps just a-setting, or going into an everlasting eclipse. Consider, therefore, what account you can give of your improvement of your past time. How have you let the precious golden sands of your glass run? Have you not wasted your precious moments, your precious days, your precious years? . . . What have you done with them? What is become of them all? And if God, that hath given you your time, should now call you to an account, what account could you give to him?"

This is pointed and personal. It does not sound like the preaching of the philosophic theology of a century and a half ago,—nor again like some of the sociological generalities to-day. And nothing can be plainer and clearer than its diction. It is certainly a long remove from the leviathan flounderings and blowings of fifty years before.

B. Franklin, as he thriftily subscribed himself, slipped his cable with the past at an early day. The freedom of the press was a subject for posterity to talk about, but not for the owners of the one licensed infernal machine of Massachusetts Bay, which gave them such trouble after the day that Thomas a Kempis' devout book, "Imitation of Christ," escaped the vigilance of the

Benjamin
Franklin.

censors and the president of Harvard, who was bondsman for the orthodoxy of all its publications. It was 1755 before the leash was slipped from the Boston press, and then in the interest of a controversy no longer theological, but political. Before this, however, other presses had been busy. Two in New York, two in Philadelphia, and the "Virginia Gazette" were working in milder climates and with less stiffness in their joints. The printer's apprentice who had rebelled against Massachusetts supervision set up a particularly versatile hand-power press in Philadelphia. Its usefulness and adaptability were by no means limited to a weekly issue of the "Mercury." Its manager had a generous inclination to benefit his fellow men in the direction of a wider knowledge and a better literary taste. He also had an unerring perception of what they relished and of what was best for them, as well as of the profitable margin between what was wanted by the populace and what they needed. (He was a born editor and publisher, successful in his aims to elevate public taste and also prosperous in this undertaking.) His equally strenuous inculcation of economy and of industry and of diligence in business must be passed over here, much as it then contributed to the common welfare. His educational and literary efforts are all that can now be noticed. They began with himself. (Browsing among such books as came in his way, chiefly theological and classical, with now and then a story of Indian captivity and war, he struck the first treasure in a copy of "Pilgrim's Progress" and the second in an odd volume of the "Spectator," which must have come here as a stowaway and was very likely the solitary representative of the English classics in Boston. However this may be, it became Franklin's instructor in

the art of prose writing. In the arrangement of words and the order of thoughts he compared his own meagre vocabulary and lack of sequence with the verbal wealth and logical succession in the essays of Addison and Steele. He rewrote these from memory, and noted how much they shrunk in his hands. His shortage became his gain thereafter. Soon he began to show a new opulence of expression and an orderly marshalling of his ideas. Hackneyed phrases were dismissed, repetition abandoned, variety introduced. The 'prentice hand had been to Queen Anne's school and had caught the trick of composition from the wits at Button's coffee-house.

Henceforth he was qualified to teach his countrymen. Anonymously at first in literary trial trips, slipped under the "Courant" office door, criticism upon which His Literary Service to his Countrymen. he got by eavesdropping. Outgrowing his proprietor-brother, he was driven out of Boston, to the ultimate advantage of a larger constituency in Philadelphia, and finally to his own profit, after several experiences as rough as they were instructive. But the schoolmaster always came down on his feet and managed to stumble uphill. Patient, even tempered, and shrewd, he met every rivalry with one better, and "Silence Dogood" of Boston blossomed out into "The Busybody" of Philadelphia, (bent on reformation of morals and reconstruction of literature.)

In the last he began with what his contemporaries most needed when they sat down to write, namely, plain English. The language had been sadly corrupted and distorted by preceding generations. By all accounts his neighbors used very plain speech in their conversation. He showed them that it was equally valuable in compo-

sition—after weeding. He knew the worth of a common word rightly placed and of idiomatic vernacular. His weapon of offence and defence had a strong back of common sense and a keen edge of wit. With it he clove his way through obstacles as King Richard through the iron bar, and through popular follies as Saladin through the pillow. (Ignorance laughed on at its own neat decapitation, not knowing that its head was off until it tumbled.) Such a performer was sure to be popular, since every one's turn to laugh would come. Some of the humor is coarse and some would be called flat in these days when an American will wade through three comic papers without a smile. But people of that time had not been polished into propriety by urban life and case-hardened for a century and a half by a steady blast of humor. It was a joke both practical and verbal then if a man was besmeared with tar and called a Tartar. And there was broader wit which was greeted with louder laughter. The "Speech of Miss Polly Baker" and "The Witch Trial at Mount Holly" and "The Meditations on a Quart Mug" and the astrologer's method of forecasting the weather were not too amusing nor too coarse for the times. Better than these was the famous "Speech of Father Abraham at the Auction," printed in "Poor Richard's Almanac" in 1758 and reprinted in countless forms the world over ever since. It introduced American literature, such as it was, to all Europe. That this specimen had a character and value of its own was proven by its translation into a dozen languages and its sale by hundreds of thousands. This lay sermon on the way to meet hard times and adversity by thrift and economy, diligence, industry, and personal attention to business instead of grumbling at

taxes was the kind of talk that appealed to men of sense and to everybody else by the cheerful homeliness of its diction. Stuffed full of Poor Richard's best proverbs and their practical, worldly wisdom, it came home to people's better second thoughts with convincing power. The sharp hits at pride, extravagance, and luxury were relished by communities not yet committed to them. Democracy in every nation welcomed the American's sayings as its hope in the future. In this way the first colonial man of letters got abroad and carried everything by storm at home. No man was so accepted and quoted. His maxims were household words and even crept into pulpits on Sundays. They crossed the sea and made hearts warm to welcome their author in after years.

As literature it would be unfair to judge of Franklin's early productions by present standards, or again entirely by contemporary works in England, for he had a practical end to accomplish with a constituency whose limitations he knew and endeavored to meet. No foreign writer then and no modern writer to-day could do what he did. And at that period of his life his greatest ambition was to be a useful rather than an accomplished writer. His main literary effort was to make his meaning clear. It was a good beginning for a national literature. He was the first of his guild who was always understood. It is not to be denied that he sometimes made foolish things plain as well as wise ones. But who has not done the same in his salad days if not later? Let the man who was bent on abolishing provincialism be gauged by his best efforts.

One of these was the importation of forty-five pounds' worth of books purchased by subscription in 1732. It

would be gratifying to know their titles and how far these differed from all previous importations. If they were a part of the contemporary literature of England, published since the beginning of the

The First
Public
Library.

century, they might represent such writers as Dryden, Pope, Addison, Steele, Defoe, Farquhar, Cibber, Clarendon, Swift, Locke, Prior, Shaftesbury, Congreve, Berkeley, Gay, Ramsay, Burnet, Young, Thomson, Fielding. That these would be a revelation to colonists is certain, since the library of the first college in the land contained none of the above as late as 1723. Great praise, therefore, is due to the man who ran the literary blockade with such contraband books for the improvement of the popular taste. (They may not have done much for it immediately, but they formed the nucleus around which gathered the first public library in the country. And this is but one of several great agencies for benefiting mankind of which Franklin was the founder.)

Leaving his philosophical, scientific, and political attainments to his biographers, and keeping strictly to his literary performances, it may be said that his

His "Auto-
biography."

"Autobiography" is the best of these. By this, at least, he will always be best known as a writer. Into it went the story of his other doings and achievements as boy and man. No fictitious character was ever treated with greater frankness. Unreserve establishes the truth of the story. The author writes down the account of his life as if it were not worth while to make it appear better than it is. He mentions, so far as he completed the narrative, his successes and his failures, with the exception of an attempt to found the first monthly magazine, in this country. But no publication could long

survive the title of "The General Magazine and Historical Chronicle for All the British Plantations in America." It was to Franklin's credit that this one carried so much top hamper for the space of six months before foundering.

The "Autobiography" is so well known that one passage will serve as well as another to recall the lucidity of its style and the practical wisdom of its author. Even in such a disputed matter as paper currency it is easy to see the persuasive force of Franklin's observations.

"About this time there was a cry among the people for more paper money, only fifteen thousand pounds being extant in the province, and that soon to be sunk. The wealthy inhabitants oppos'd any addition, being against all paper currency, from an apprehension that it would depreciate, as it had done in New England, to the prejudice of all creditors. We had discussed the point in the Junto, where I was on the side of addition, being persuaded that the first small sum, struck in 1723, had done much good by increasing the trade, employment, and number of inhabitants in the province, since I now saw all the old houses inhabited, and many new ones building: whereas I remembered well, that when I first walked about the streets of Philadelphia, eating my roll, I saw most of the houses in Walnut street, between Second and Front streets, with bills on their doors, "To be let;" which made me then think the inhabitants of the city were deserting it one after another.

"Our debates possess'd me so fully of the subject, that I wrote and printed an anonymous pamphlet entitled 'The Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency.' It was well received by the common people in general; but the rich disliked it, for it increas'd and strengthen'd the clamor for more money, and they happening to have no writers among them that were able to answer it, their opposition slacken'd and the point was carried by a majority in the House. My friends there, who conceived I had been of some service, thought fit to reward me by employing me

in printing the money ; a very profitable jobb and a great help to me. This was another advantage gain'd by being able to write."

The seeming ease with which he wrote is equalled by the facility with which his principles of political economy were impressed upon voters, and by the readiness with which they contributed to his personal profit. It is amusing to note that he attributes all his success to that which he chiefly prized, — his literary ability.

The closing page of the first part of this record, interrupted by the affairs of the Revolution, is interesting as an account of the first attempt at a public library in the country ; the clubbing of the books belonging to the Junto proving a failure after a year.

"And now I set on foot my first project of a public library. I drew up the proposals and, by the help of my friends in the Junto, procured fifty subscribers of forty shillings each to begin with, and ten shillings for fifty years, the term our company was to continue. We afterwards obtained a charter, the company being increased to one hundred : this was the mother of all the North American subscription libraries now so numerous."

(This collection of books grew to be the present Philadelphia Library. When he resumed the story of his life thirteen years later he took up the subject of this project, and added something that confirms what has been already asserted of provincial reading :

"Those who loved reading were obliged to send for their books from England. . . . So few were the readers in Philadelphia, and the majority of us so poor, that I was not able, with great industry, to find more than fifty persons willing to pay down for this purpose forty shillings each, and ten shillings per annum. On this little fund we began. The books were im-

ported; the library was opened one day in a week for lending to subscribers. . . . reading became fashionable, and our people, having no publick amusements to divert their attention from study, became better acquainted with books, and in a few years were observed by strangers to be better instructed and more intelligent than people of the same rank generally are in other countries."

For those who wish to read more than the "Autobiography" and the other specimens of his writing already mentioned, an abundance is furnished in his collected works, fifty editions of which have been published. This alone indicates that he occupies a place in literature as well as in the hearts of Americans. Next to Washington he will always be regarded as the chief builder of the nation. He did much of this foundation work by other activities, but in forming those habits of the people which have made them prosperous his early writings were most effectual. His maxims became their common law of living.)

Opinions will differ as to the relative place he occupies in our literature. He himself would have asked to be regarded only as a useful frontiersman clearing away first growths and introducing better. As such he is the first in order of time and a pioneer in the work that was to be done first. He was also our first humorist, the predecessor of a line which has sometimes amused and sometimes perplexed foreign readers by what they are pleased to designate as American humor. In this, as in everything else, Franklin made himself clear, and took no risks for the sake of delicacy, as his audience then would not have had him. Since his day the crude Pennsylvania product has been refined and reproduced in a

hundred forms to suit the demands of a more fastidious and art-appreciating age.

His principal service to letters was in broadening and educating American taste beyond its domestic pattern in writing and its exclusive habit in reading, toward the literature of the modern world and its standards and value. There was something to be done for a country into which a copy of Shakespeare first came one hundred years behind time, and waited thirteen years for a companion copy to be advertised for sale. Franklin did much in creating a demand for this and other classics by people who needed to read them.

X

THREE HISTORIANS AND A POET

THE struggle between the old style and the new in letters was continued for some time after the coming of the newspaper, the almanac, and Benjamin Franklin. Liberal Tendencies. The pulpit as yet had nothing to fear from the press. In Virginia, where in 1670 Governor Berkeley "thanked God that there were no free schools nor printing and hoped there would not be for a hundred years," there was one printing-house after sixty years, but for thirty-five years more it was kept well in hand by the royal governor. The conservative magistrate had this desire of his heart fulfilled more exactly than in others mentioned in the "Burwell Papers," a piece of contemporary history well worth reading.

A more modern spirit came in with James Blair, founder and president of the College of William and Mary, who "could not rest till teachers were in the land," and until he had helped to advertise the colony by his share in a book entitled "The Present State of Virginia and the College." He had already contributed to the current theological literature of the country one hundred and seventeen discourses on the Sermon on the Mount. Another Virginian, the genial cosmopolite, William Byrd of Westover, turned from his broad lands and social delights to run the North Carolina line through the Dismal Swamp and other desolate regions. He then

described the adventure, to the cost of the backwoods settlers, in a vivacious narrative which was destined to wait one hundred and twelve years for a publisher.

Meantime the historical spirit, which was always chronic in New England, breaks out there afresh. The self-consciousness of a people who were taking themselves and life most seriously was never

Thomas
Prince.

weary of recording the progress they were making, — in annals and diaries at first, with occasional memoranda of Indian warfare, but at length with the genuine historical virtues of accuracy and impartiality. Thomas Prince, a Boston minister for forty years, is a great improvement on his predecessors in charitable fairness when he observes: "I am for leaving every one to the freedom of worshipping according to the light of his conscience."

He is also careful to examine original sources of information and determines to take nothing upon hearsay or tradition. But he deemed the story of the century of New England life so important that it should have the background of all time in which to set it. Accordingly he began with the creation of man and labored on through ages and dispensations. When he reached the Puritan Commonwealth he was out of breath and time. His first volume was an introduction, five thousand and six hundred years in length, with only ten years of colonial record. Three years more were summed up in pamphlets, and his work was done. He was not the only one who wrote ancient history when intending to write modern. The time had not yet come for improved historical methods. The colonist could not get out of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle habit. Still, he was accumulating material for his grandchildren's perspective treatment, and

for a generation of historians in the next century who should be the peers of all their race.

In this mid-century period Virginia had a historian who fell into the ambush which is always awaiting those who attempt to write up recent affairs.

William
Stith.

William Stith discards American antiquities beyond Columbus, but he cannot forbear enumerating the various voyages of discovery preceding Raleigh and John Smith, with an allusion to the pride of some writers in mentioning others as remote as the Carthaginian Hanno and Plato's fable of the lost Atlantis. After a while he gets to the Virginia colony, but it is the reconstructed narrative of John Smith, in whose veracity he has a provincial and patriotic confidence. Yet his intention is good, and his sense of what a historian should be is keen. "I declare myself of no party, but have labored solely with a view to find out and relate the truth." That he did not always succeed was due to the dust which was still in the air from recent commotions. On the sunny side this became to him a resplendent cloud, on the other an earthy mist. And yet this history must have been interesting reading in its day, as it still is to those who prefer detailed particulars to events in their proportion and relation. The exploits of Smith, the increase in stock and produce, the abundance of game, the variations of Indian temper, the dispositions of governors, are examples of topics which busied the chronicler and entertained his readers with pen portrayal until a later fashion of history came in with the next century.

From Stith's "History of Virginia" it may be interesting to take a section which he wrote for the year that the "Mayflower" came to Plymouth — 1620:

"In *May* this year, there was held another General Assembly, which has, through mistake and the indolence and negligence of our historians in searching such ancient records as are still extant in the country, been commonly reputed the first General Assembly of Virginia. But that privilege was granted sooner. . . . And we are likewise told by Mr. Beverly, that a Dutch ship, putting in this year, sold twenty negroes to the Colony, which were the first of that generation that were ever brought to Virginia."

And then without a word of transition this follows:

"Tobacco, a stinking, nauseous, and unpalatable weed, is certainly an odd commodity to make the staple and riches of a country. It is neither of necessity nor ornament to human life; but the use of it depends upon humour and custom, and may be looked upon as one of the most singular and extraordinary pieces of luxury that the wantonness of man hath yet invented or given into. It is not therefore to be wondered that the Colony's eagerness and application almost solely to tobacco [raising] was much distasted and opposed by the Company; especially in those early times before it had obtained such a general reception and dominion in the world. To which it may be added that the King himself had a sort of natural antipathy to it, and was perpetually haranguing, railing, and even writing against it. For that Solomon of England thought it not below his royal wisdom and dignity to write a treatise, entitled, "A Counter-Blast to Tobacco."

New York furnished another example of the prevailing mode in the account which William Smith gave of his native province from its first discovery to the year 1732. The writer labors under the delusion which possessed all the historical writers of the time that justice, accuracy, and impartiality are signally exemplified in their own work. And this despite emphatic intimations to the contrary by contemporaries. In this instance local poli-

tics, which appears always to have been in Manhattan air, got into sober history, not always in the interest of truth, if of righteousness. This, however, does not destroy the piquancy of certain passages, nor the unconscious humor which crops out in other veracious ones. The race for wealth divides attention with the citizen's ardor to serve the public in official station, while the pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of letters are not uniformly an easy third in the competition. Later there was a change in this respect.

In Massachusetts the historian of the period who is to be rated with the two just mentioned, though ranking them both, was Thomas Hutchinson, the last provincial governor of the Bay. A wealth of materials had accumulated which he thought should be set in order before further destruction of ancient records took place. With becoming modesty he wishes that some one else had undertaken the task. He makes the rare admission that the affairs of a colony cannot afford much matter interesting or entertaining to the world in general. His chief design is to save from oblivion, for the benefit of his countrymen, facts which from their nature afford but a dull and heavy narration. Uncommon sense is shown by this view of his subject and himself; also in the quick disposal of all previous history and voyages to America. In three pages he is in the midst of affairs on the Massachusetts coast, and in a few more is busy with the Puritan settlement on the Bay. Although he keeps the date conveniently in the margin, he is writing something more than a chronicle. There is enough life and warmth in it to give spirit and movement to incidents which pass in rapid succession. The arrival of seventeen

Thomas
Hutchinson.

ships with fifteen hundred passengers in 1630, their first and second impressions of the country, the distresses of the first winter, the streak of grim humor in the single inhabitant of Boston, Blackstone, who told intruders that he liked the lords brethren no better than the lords bishops, and that his squatter sovereignty extended over all city lots in the peninsula, or words to that effect—all this and more is put down in readable sentences of modern cast. In the midst of describing a famine one cannot tell whether the historian smiled when he mentioned the man who after a dinner of clams “returned thanks to God, who had given them to suck of the abundance of the seas and of treasure hid in the sands.” And this was not in Narragansett. Side lights are thrown upon magisterial envyings and rivalries; the man with the greatest solemnity in walk and conversation wearing the palm. To his native majesty of bearing such a one as Vane added the adornment of “four sergeants walking before him with halberds, when he went either to court or to church.” Republican simplicity did not begin with the Puritan in 1636. His version of his ancestress’ career, Mrs. Anne Hutchinson, is moderate and fair, when it is remembered what monstrous lies the elders told about her. Now and then small matters seem to get more than due attention, but no one in these go-as-you-please times can imagine how the sinfulness of wearing long hair rent the religious society of New England in the seventeenth century.

A single passage may illustrate the judicial spirit of the governor in small things which were then large:

“In every age indifferent things have been condemned as sinful and placed among the greatest immoralities. The text

against long hair in Corinthians as contrary to the custom in the apostle's day, induced our ancestors to think it criminal in all ages and all nations and to look upon it as one of the barbarities of the Indians. The rule in New England was that none should wear their hair below their ears. In a clergyman it was said to be the greater offence, as they were in an especial manner required to go with their ears open. A few years before tobacco was prohibited under a penalty, and the smoke of it in some manuscripts is compared to the smoke of the bottomless pit. Some of the clergy fell into the practice of smoking, and tobacco by an act of government was set at liberty. In England periwigs came into use soon after the restoration. In New England they were an eyesore for thirty years after and did not generally obtain until about the time of the revolution, and even then the example and authority of Dr. Owen and other nonconforming ministers who wore wigs were necessary to remove all scruples concerning them."

It is one of the incidental proofs of the great influence of the clergy in colonial days that they were leaders in fashion as well as in theology, literature, and legislation. When Hutchinson deals with matters of vital importance it is in the same equable tone and temper. Efforts to instruct the Indians, persecution of so-called witches, interposition of civil authority when the church became high-handed, relations with the home government, and other such doings are all set down with greater impartiality than had been seen in any previous record and with little personal comment. The writer succeeded in blending into a continuous narrative the best and most trustworthy of the materials that had been left by his predecessors. Some of these documents must have seemed to him like scraps from the rag-bag, but after the thrifty custom of the time he managed to weave

particolored strips and tangled yarns into a bright and serviceable fabric. When the distractions of his public station are considered, and toward the last the personal disturbance and loss of manuscripts attending the change in political conditions, and finally his ill-treatment at the court of the royal George, this three-volume history of Governor Hutchinson's becomes one of the most attractive examples of our early literature. Besides, it has an absorbing interest of its own, as every reader of it will ascertain. It is the review of one hundred and seventy years of colonial life, by a chief magistrate who, as the last of his line, saw it pass into the life of a new nation. As a royal governor and as a true American he told well, for his time, the story of what was then British America.

As a good loyalist himself, his account of the devotion of Massachusetts Bay to the king a hundred years before the Revolution, is significant:

"On the one hand, I think it appears that the government had not sufficient excuse for not complying more fully with what the King required of them by his letter in 1662. On the other hand, the commission was a stretch of power, superseding in many respects the authority granted by the charter, and there appears upon this occasion not an obstinate perverse spirit, but a modest, steady adherence to what they imagined at least to be their just rights and privileges. At the same time they endeavoured, not only by repeated humble addresses and professions of loyalty to appease his Majesty, but they purchased a ship-load of masts (the freight whereof cost them sixteen hundred pounds sterling) and presented to the King, which he graciously accepted. Contributions and subscriptions were also made for the fleet and for the relief of sufferers by the great fire in London."

On the freedom of the press, he writes :

“There had been a press for printing at Cambridge for near twenty years. The court appointed two persons in 1662, licensors of the press, and prohibited the publishing any books or newspapers which should not be supervised by them, and in 1668 the supervisors having allowed the printing of ‘Thomas a Kempis de Imitatione Christi,’ the court interposed, ‘it being wrote by a popish minister, and containing some things less safe to be issued among the people,’ and therefore they commended to the licensors a more full revisal, and ordered the press to stop in the meantime. In a constitution less popular this would have been thought too great an abridgment of the subject’s liberty.”

And on the “Sabbath” :

“From a sacred regard to the religion of the Christian Sabbath, a scruple arose of the lawfulness of calling the first day of the week Sunday, as they always, upon any occasion, whether in a civil or religious relation to it, stiled it either the Lord’s day or the Sabbath. As the exception to the word Sunday was founded upon its superstitious idolatrous origin, the same scruple naturally followed with respect to all the other days of the week and of most of the months, which had the same origin.”

The following may have interest this year, 1902 :

“The small pox, this year [1721] made great havoc in Boston and some adjacent towns. Having been prevented from spreading for near 20 years, all born within that time, besides many who had escaped it before, were liable to the distemper. Of 5889 which took it in Boston 844 died. Inoculation was introduced upon this occasion, contrary to the minds of the inhabitants in general, and not without hazard to the lives of those who promoted it, from the rage of the people. Dr. C. Mather, one of the principal ministers of Boston, had observed in the philosophical transactions, a letter of Timonius from Constantinople, and a treatise of Pylarinus, Venetian consul

at Smyrna, giving a very favorable account of the operation, and he recommended a trial to the physicians of the town, but they all declined it except Doctor Boylston, who made himself very obnoxious. To show the confidence he had of success he began with his own children and servants. Many sober, pious people were struck with horror and were of opinion that if any of his patients should die, he ought to be treated as a murderer. The vulgar were enraged to that degree that his family was hardly safe in his house, and he often met with affronts and insults in the streets," etc.

Aside from the three representative histories which have been mentioned there were other prose writings of the mid-century period, miscellaneous in character, largely theological, but with a goodly proportion of scientific, political, and philosophical topics interspersed. The most of this is not worth reading. It is interesting only as a sign that the colonial mind was broadening. A few titles, however, arrest attention. "Ptolemy, King of the Gypsies; New and True Egyptian Fortune-Teller," Boston, 1753, and the next year "Tom Thumb, the Monster of Monsters." As an antidote to these dangerous books appears "The Youth's Entertaining Amusement; or, A Plain Guide to Psalmody." The dissipation of the singing school had probably begun to threaten communities. But John Witherspoon's "Serious Inquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Stage," smothered any longings after the theatre which a Boston boy might have in his dreams. He would be an old man before he should witness a spectacular play in waking hours. The anonymous author of "Be Merry and be Wise," knew better than to go beyond the signature "T. T." in the year of the accession of George III. He was doubtless rebuked when he read in the following year Francis Worcester's

"Rise, Travels, and Triumph of Death." In fine, the pleasantry of literature at this time is suggestive of the smile of a skull.

The poet of the age who was most appreciated was Dr. Mather Byles, the magnificent. He was more than half as accomplished and three-quarters as imposing as the magnate whose name he bore, the author of the "Magnalia." His unprofessional studies were in English classics as well as in ancient, a notable exception to the habit of his day. His proclivity for letters was surpassed only by his pulpit eloquence and his wit. He knew what was current in literary circles in England and corresponded with Lansdowne, Watts, and Pope. The last complimented the American poet by sending him a fine copy of his translation of the "Odyssey," a book which Dr. Byles accompanied with his own verses in lending it:

"Go, my dear Pope, transport th' attentive fair,
And soothe with winning harmony her ear,
'T will add new graces to thy heav'nly song,
To be repeated by her gentle tongue.
Old Homer's shade shall smile if she commend,
And Pope be proud to write as Byles to lend."

Beginning his versifying in college, he kept it up through life at intervals. It will not be necessary to prove that he was born and died a loyalist after the following example of his verse, which might have been entitled, "The King is Dead; Long Live the King!"

"He dies! let nature own the direful blow,
Sigh all ye winds, with tears the rivers flow,
Let the wide ocean, loud in anguish, roar,
And tides of grief pour plenteous on the shore;
No more the spring shall bloom, or morning rise,
But night eternal wrap the sable skies."

Then is illustrated the sudden wrench to which poets laureate are sometimes subjected :

“Enough, my muse, give all thy tears away ;
Break, ye dull shades, and rise the rosy day,
Let Britain’s sorrows cease, her joys enlarge,
The First revives the Second George.
Hail, mighty prince, O shining sovereign, hail !
Fain would the muse lisp her prophetic tale ;
In mystic lays the future years relate,
And sing the records of unripened state,”

which the loyal American then proceeds to do in couplets that Pope, his master, might have approved in a double sense. Still, the improvement in imitation is great, and the copy is better than hitherto. Even in lighter strain some contemporary hit off the majestic divine in better form than that of the ancient elegy :

“There’s punning Byles, provokes our smiles,
A man of stately parts,
He visits folks to crack his jokes,
Which never mend their hearts.
With strutting gait and wig so great,
He walks along the streets,
And throws out wit, or what ’s like it,
To every one he meets.”

But there is hope for the American muse. Its first agony is over and its writhings begin to be graceful. At least it is in the prevailing mode of London Town.

XI

REMONSTRANT WRITERS

ABOUT the year 1765 American writings took on a new form and spirit. For a century and a half the colonists had been carrying the separatist principle into their religious and political life. Massachusetts desired nothing of Rhode Island beyond keeping its own side of the line. Virginia had no favors to ask of Maryland, nor Pennsylvania of New York. Each settlement cultivated the traditional seclusion of the Briton in his country house, and kept itself removed from the highways of the world's life and literature. But from the parliament-house in London these scattered plantations easily narrowed into a single strip of farms and fishing stations from which revenue might be raised for the crown. Oppressive legislation to secure tribute forced upon these isolated and exclusive communities the idea of confederation, which events at length matured into that of union. This thought of association, now so familiar after more than one hundred years of the fact, was the idle dream of a few visionary radicals in 1765, and a nightmare to everybody else. Nevertheless the writings of the succeeding decade show that a strong diversion had taken place in colonial thought and in the manner of making it known.

Separation
and
Association.

All the energy which had hitherto gone into theological athletics now found a field for its exercise in discussion of the rights of the British subject. Polemics of the meeting-house began to yield the floor ^{Political Discussion.} to debates of the town meeting in the interest of crystallizing colonies. The same change is noticeable in printed matter, and Edwards' treatise on "Original Sin" was laid aside for Franklin's "Cool Thoughts on the Present Situation of Our Public Affairs." Prognostics of this change had been discerned by the weather-wise as far back as the mid-century.

In the very year that Franklin was explaining his theory of thunder gusts Jonathan Mahew discoursed concerning "Unlimited Submission and Non-resistance to Higher Powers." Later Franklin stirred up Richard Jackson to write about "The Interest of Great Britain with Regard to Her Colonies," to say nothing of appeals and remonstrances that were frequently sent to the home government.

It was not, however, until the threatened passing of the stamp act that our literature began to bristle with pens engaged in the controversy for constitutional rights. Hitherto American writings had made little stir abroad, and with good reason. Now they began to command attention through their relation to the British exchequer first, and then by their dignity, strength, and knowledge. They were a revelation to the English people of growth in wisdom and power unexpected in a child who had been living so far from home among savages. "Really, it was quite remarkable," and more remarkable twenty years later. There is such an abundance of this new literature of reasonable protest and argumentative remonstrance

that a complete enumeration and the slightest characterization of its writers would exceed the limits assigned to this topic. Mention must therefore be restricted to its leading contributors, and be brief at that.

Franklin has already been spoken of as the forerunner of a departure in miscellaneous writing from previous fashions. He is also a pioneer in political pamphleteering, which itself gave way to the essay in newspapers. The record of what he did with his pen in the course of a long career in the service of his country may be seen in his published works; the actual results which he accomplished may never be fully known.

Next to him in the order of time and foremost in the North was James Otis. His pamphlet on "The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved," 1764, advertised the strained relations between England and America, pointed out the injustice of recent legislation, based an appeal for redress upon the rights of the governed as protected by the British constitution, and deplored alienation from the mother country and the king. It was the final word of a loyalty which could not and would not become a slavery. It was a restatement of the rights which the barons asserted at Runnymede. It rested upon the bedrock of Magna Charta. Thus it became itself a pyramid of constitutional logic from which other writers soon began to quarry the corner stones of their several edifices, built each after a style of its own. But the sublime original will always stand as a landmark at the dividing of the ways. It did much to divide them, notwithstanding its sincere protests of reverence and love for Great Britain. The colonies saw their cause stated as they had not been

able to formulate it themselves. The grievance had been defined; should it be borne submissively, or further protested against, or forcibly resisted? The answer to this threefold question was not uniform. The last two phases of it had each its advocates. Oxenbridge Thacher's "Sentiments of a British American" should be read to learn how conciliatory and moderate the best colonial temper tried to be, and was, under provocation, and loyal withal to the throne. The pamphlet debate which took place between governor Stephen Hopkins of Providence and lawyer Martin Howard of Newport, out of which the impulsive Otis could not keep himself, illustrates the divisions that had already begun to separate neighbors and families, and would by and by send many to Halifax. It also exemplifies the kind of literature which these stalwart statesmen were making. The thought-habit of it had been bred in the meeting-house and the court-house for generations, but the style of it was not the antique manner of either Dr. Mather or Judge Sewall. Samuel Johnson's orotund deliverances had reached New England, or, at least, his dictionary had arrived, and the rhythmic majesty of a ponderous diction suited well the dignity of such themes as were to be discussed by cultivated men in two hemispheres. It was as noble as the issues at stake; as stately as the manners of the time. Affected pedantry was driven out by the momentous questions impending; expletives of emotion restrained by an overshadowing storm cloud that was gathering. One cannot read these pamphlets and others like them without knowing that they dealt with one of the upheavals of history and that the men who wrote them had already been lifted to a higher level.

Moreover, candor forces the admission that in literary execution loyalist writers are not behind the patriot. A century and a quarter of inbred contempt for the Tory may have induced color blindness in our criticism. If so, the historic imagination must be invoked to set us back to the days when all were as yet citizens of an empire upon which the sun did not set, and of which all its subjects were proud, even if its rulers were unwise. In the commotion of change from colonies to free states some actors were slower in movement than others, and some clung to the old home government to their immense cost; but estimates of literature must be independent of even the noblest issues in contests which create it, and fairness to both sides is essential to the completeness of even an outline sketch.

The side of resistance to the Crown had no more earnest champion with tongue or pen than Samuel Adams. He was great in town-meeting, but his revolutionary articles in the newspapers, his "Circular Letter to Each Colonial Legislature," his "Appeal to the World; or, A Vindication of the Town of Boston," and his "Earnest Appeal to the People" were powerful instrumentalities in strengthening the fast-growing spirit of union for separation from Great Britain. More than Franklin, even, he represents the forceful literature of the public press in that period. Through the columns of the "Boston Gazette," the "Massachusetts Spy," and the "Providence Gazette," he reached a majority of New England homes, and was copied in the journals of other provinces. A letter of his in the last-named paper on March 18, 1769, is probably the first printed intimation of a possible rupture with England. Owning no newspaper himself, he

Loyalist
Writers.

Samuel
Adams.

was the chief journalist in several. Not as Sam Adams alone, but as a dozen writers, for all that readers could guess by his various signatures. His political principles, however, never varied through all their multiform expositions by his pen. In state papers written for public assemblies, in open letters addressed to those in authority, or to the people as the source of all authority, he was the creator or director of opinion. His writings constitute a large part of the literature which helped on the great revolution in thoughts that preceded revolutionary acts.

The name and writings of Josiah Quincy should be classed with those of Otis and Adams as remonstrants against the encroachments of Britain. The three together represent the advanced attitude of New England in this period of political controversy. More than others they snuffed the battle from afar and hastened to meet its coming.

The predominant sentiment of the decade before the Declaration of Independence had an able exponent in John Dickinson of Pennsylvania and other middle colonies in which he lived and labored. He believed, with the majority of colonists at that time, that colonial liberty might be secured without sacrificing union with the mother country. To maintain and encourage this view of affairs he wrote unceasingly. Pamphlets and newspaper articles flowed from his pen. People awaited with eager expectancy the weekly instalments of his "Farmer's Letters." They read with admiration the state papers which he framed for assemblies and conventions. His "resolutions," "petitions," "instructions," and "addresses," and other documents of similar character and importance, show that he was the trusted

John Dickinson, the Conservative.

spokesman of the majority. They earned him the title of the "Penman of the Revolution." Such he continued to be until the oppressive measures of the British ministry drove the larger part of the colonists beyond their patient, loyal, and hopeful position to a resort to arms for the defence of their constitutional rights. But John Dickinson stood unmoved in his conservative belief, although he manifested his patriotism by joining the army when the issue came to the trial by combat. His "Farmer's Letters" will always remain as interpreters of the remonstrant period in the great transition. Protesting against the thought of independence as a fatal calamity, he insists upon freedom and the recognition of rights by the Crown and Parliament. With equal sincerity he urges loyalty and a dignified appeal to the British sense of justice and to the principles of English liberty. Such consistency was appreciated by wise and prudent statesmen in Parliament and out of it, but they were in the minority and the King's fools in the majority. The few wise men by their wisdom could not save the state; also the foolish were destined to precipitate the conflict which lost them the best half of a continent. None the less valuable, however, as political literature are the writings of the man who stood for moderation, restraint, and what is now known as the policy of arbitration. War became the final resort because compelled, but this necessity detracted nothing from the higher statesmanship of Dickinson and the nobility of his writings. These had a wider recognition than those of any other man except Franklin. Published in four-fifths of the colonial newspapers week by week, the "Farmer's Letters" were afterward printed in eight editions here, three in Great Britain and one

on the continent, where their sentiments were received with great approbation. For a time the author was the first man of letters in America.

The dominant note of these Letters is indicated in the third of them, which also shows the divisions in public sentiment and the moderate position of its writer as compared, for instance, with Paine at one extreme and Seabury at the other.

“Sorry I am to learn that there are some few persons who shake their heads with solemn motion, and pretend to wonder what can be the meaning of these letters. Great Britain, they say, is too powerful to contend with; she is determined to oppress us; it is vain to speak of right on one side when there is power on the other; when we are strong enough to resist we shall attempt it; but now we are not strong enough and therefore we had better be quiet; it signifies nothing to convince us that our rights are invaded when we cannot defend them. . . . Are these men ignorant that usurpations, which might have been successfully opposed at first, acquire strength by continuance, and thus become irresistible? Do they condemn the conduct of these colonies concerning the *stamp-act*? Or have they forgot its successful issue? Ought the colonies at that time to have trusted for relief to the fortuitous events of futurity? . . . Therefore it becomes necessary to enquire whether ‘our rights are invaded?’ . . . I will now tell the gentlemen what is the meaning of the letters. The meaning of them is, to convince the people of these colonies that they are at this moment exposed to the most imminent dangers; and to persuade them immediately, vigorously, and unanimously to exert themselves in the most firm, but most peaceable manner, for obtaining relief. The cause of liberty is a cause of too much dignity to be sullied by turbulence and tumult. It ought to be maintained in a manner suitable to her nature. Those who engage in it should breathe a sedate, yet fervent spirit, animating them to actions of prudence, justice, modesty, bravery, humanity, and

magnanimity. . . I hope, my dear countrymen, that you will, in every colony, be on your guard against those who may endeavour to stir you up, under pretences of patriotism, to any measures disrespectful to our Sovereign and our mother country. Hot, rash, disorderly proceedings injure the reputation of a people as to wisdom, valour, and virtue, without procuring them the least benefit."

Thus he wrote on, counselling moderation and forbearance and loyalty to the throne.

Then the gust which whirled before the storm swept people away from this self-centred statesman in two directions — toward armed resistance on the part of the majority, and toward unprotesting adhesion to existing authority by the remainder. Each division intensified one of the two sentiments which all had formerly held in common — liberty and loyalty. The expression of these emotions constitutes the literature of the last part of this period in its two branches, which diverged more and more, until one of them culminated in the Declaration of Independence, and the other wasted itself in profitless dissent. To mention the leaders in the first movement is all that can be done here and now.

In those days politics shared the pulpit with divinity, and the unorthodox Jonathan Mahew should not be over-

Politics in
the Pulpit
and Else-
where.

looked among those who had already been conspicuous in the forefront of the controversy.

His sermons were mighty inspirations to his neighbors, but as literature they have lost much of the power which accompanied their delivery. Other divines echoed his political doctrines — if they could not his theological views — whose patriotic sermons now lie buried in the crypts of antiquarian libraries.

It is rather in the political essays of statesmen that the driftings of opinion and the character of its literature can best be discovered. The chief writers are so well known and their writings so accessible that it will be sufficient merely to allude to the part which John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton had in the pre-revolution controversy.

Less eminent men and writers contribute to the literature of ferment and transition, both prose and verse. In the latter department no one more abundantly than Philip Freneau. A Huguenot detestation of tyranny, strengthened by sufferings on a British prison-ship, increased the bitterness of his satirical verse as hostilities continued. He was the leader of a band of versifiers, who created the ballad literature of the revolution, which, by presenting the ludicrous side of misery, did much to cheer the hearts of patriot soldiers. Its answering verse from the other side did something toward relieving the animosity of the loyalists. The two together, like the two corresponding branches of prose writing, are reflections of the thoughts and emotions of a divided people, who were apprehensive and hopeful, fearful and desperate by turns in face of an imminent catastrophe.

In both prose and verse, however, a marked improvement is observed. The subjects of treatment were in the line of immediate and vital concern, close to men's hearts and homes. Life and liberty were involved in the discussion. Emotion as well as thought pervaded its expression. Heart as well as head engaged in its handling. There was no time or room for nonsense. With an experimental acquaintance with the traditional policy of Great Britain on the part of these writers, and a long training in the

vigorous use of the vernacular, what but a sterling political literature should result ?¹

¹ Readers are referred to the following titles : "Works of John Adams," ten volumes, Boston, 1850 ; "Samuel Adams' Life and Public Services," Wells, Boston, 1865 ; "John Dickinson's Political Writings," Wilmington, 1801 ; "Alexander Hamilton's Works," New York, 1850 ; "Jefferson's Writings," New York, 1859 ; "James Otis' Life," by Tudor, 1823 ; "Jonathan Mahew's Life and Writings," by A. Bradford ; "Josiah Quincy's Speeches," Boston, 1874. Biographical details of interest may also be found in the "American Statesmen Series."

XII

WRITERS AND SPEAKERS OF THE REVOLUTION

EVERY one knows that war does not immediately promote the growth of literature. The muses never did get on well with Mars while he was busy. Only when his work is done and can be contemplated at a safe distance can an undisturbed view of it or of anything else be taken. Homer could not have written the Iliad in Achilles' tent. The only literature that was produced there and by the black ships along the Dardanian shore was spoken. The record of it fills half of the great Epic. Oratory is pre-eminently the literature of warring periods.

All writing did not cease, to be sure, with the climax of pre-revolution letters, the Declaration of Independence, but the resources of argument, persuasion, and appeal in political and state papers had been well-nigh exhausted. Addresses to the Throne and petitions to Parliament had ended in sending taxed tea and four regiments to collect damages incident to landing it in the water of Boston harbor. Then Pitcairn's pistol gave the signal to drop pens and to fix bayonets. What was written after that was inspired by violent emotion of one kind and another. High words sprung from high temper, itself raised by high-handed injustice. Its natural and ready expression is ridicule and irony, satire and sarcasm. With these moods revolution writings begin to teem.

From Words
to Blows.

Angry words bubble up like froth from the boiling. Satirical pamphlets are thrown back and forth by Whig and Tory like the taunts of soldiers from opposing lines. They are often weighted with solid reason and sometimes heavy with argument, but they are pointed with steel. Often their impact causes an explosion of laughter on one side, of wrath on the other, followed by violence and this by retaliation. Thus the wordy war went on by the side of an armed conflict, as the shouts of battle accompany death-dealing missiles.

If these ephemeral and spirited productions are to be rated for their literary value, allowance must be made for the disturbed conditions in which they were turned out. Even when they are assigned to their secondary class of satirical composition it is not always that they can take the first rank. It is only as the patriot writer or as the loyalist, who was sometimes patriotic too, kept in the region of first principles that he made the literature of this stormy time first-class.

The essayist who did this most creditably was Thomas Paine. His cloudy decline in the afternoon of life has done much to obscure his early fame for those who do not know how great his services for the cause of freedom were. Coming from England with a letter of introduction from Franklin, he cast in his lot with Americans at a critical time and with the fullest sympathy with its most advanced sentiment. Of this he became the interpreter and advocate. Up to the battle of Lexington, and even later, the idea of independence had been repudiated by all but a few radicals. It was a project threatening the unity of the British empire. If a globe of glass is struck where will the fracture end?

Thomas
Paine's
"Common
Sense."

But Paine was not concerned about the integrity of the globe so much as about the welfare of the people who lived on the western side of it. Accordingly he wrote "Common Sense," a pamphlet whose motto might have been, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" It was an out-and-out call to withdraw from British citizenship and to set up a new government. Its circulation and success were immense. Hundreds of thousands read it. The fabric of loyalty which the people had been sincerely and fondly cherishing tumbled to the fall when this missile crashed against it. No doubt the fair edifice was honeycombed with revolt beyond men's open admission, but the shell was still standing in apparent good order when in January, 1776, this pamphlet laid open before them their unspoken thoughts and their suppressed fears or their secret hopes, as the case might be.

Of course it was received with corresponding delight or dismay, but in either event it was an appeal to abandon the position of remonstrants and suppliants to the Throne, and to demand freedom as an independent people. Six months afterward the response came in the Declaration of Independence. It is too much to say that this climactic pamphlet of Paine's evolved the crowning state paper of the colonial age. It is enough to assert that this prince of pamphleteers happened to be the man in whose hand the pointed stick drew flame that flashed far and wide in an atmosphere surcharged with St. Elmo's fire. This spirited monograph and his "Crisis" that followed it may not belong to the literature of knowledge, according to De Quincey's distinction, but they evidently pertained to the literature of power. One manifestation of this was the inspiring quality in them which called out many others in

sympathy or hostility. Then war came flooding along the coast, and above its seething crests a spindrift of bitter words flew hissing, to fall back into oblivion. Out of this it is not needful to drag what had a momentary interest which can never be revived except for the historian. But in that day those tracts for troubled times stood in the shadow of mighty names like Franklin and Jefferson and Witherspoon and Odell, William Smith, Johnson, Seabury, Chauncy, Stiles, Duffield, Cooper, Hopkinson and Brackenridge, who with their respective following on either side filled the air with a snowstorm of pamphlets and sermons, ballads and broadsides. These did effective work in strengthening the convictions, in firing the hearts, and in cheering the spirits of civilians and soldiers; but when their work was done their life was over and they must be classed among the ephemera of literature.

This, however, is not the case with Paine's "Common Sense" and "Crisis," as a few extracts will indicate. He remarks toward the end of the first pamphlet:

"I have never met with a man, either in England or America, who hath not confessed his opinion, that a separation between the countries would take place at one time or other: And there is no instance in which we have shown less judgment, than in endeavoring to describe, what we call the ripeness or fitness of the Continent for independence. As all men allow the measure, and vary only in their opinion of the time, let us, in order to remove mistakes, take a general survey of things, and endeavour if possible to find out the *very* time. But I need not go far, the inquiry ceases at once, for the *time hath found us*. The general concurrence of all things proves the fact.

"The infant state of the Colonies, as it is called, so far from being against, is an argument in favor of independence. We are sufficiently numerous, and were we more so we might be less

united. Youth is the seed-time of good habits in nations as in individuals. It might be difficult, if not impossible, to form the Continent into one Government half a century hence. The vast variety of interests, occasioned by an increase of trade and population, would create confusion. Colony would be against Colony. Wherefore the present time is the true time for establishing union. It is that time which never happens to a nation but once, viz. the time of forming itself into a government. Most nations have let slip the opportunity, and by that means have been compelled to receive laws from their conquerors instead of making laws for themselves.

"To conclude, however strange it may appear to some, or however unwilling they may be to think so, matters not, but many strong and striking reasons may be given to show, that nothing can settle our affairs so expeditiously as an open and determined declaration for independence . . . and until an independence is declared, the Continent will feel itself like a man who continues putting off some unpleasant business from day to day, yet knows it must be done, hates to set about it, wishes it over, and is continually haunted with the thoughts of its necessity."

So in "The Crisis" a more urgent appeal is made:

"Whether the independence of the Continent was declared too soon, or delayed too long, I will not now enter into as an argument. My own simple opinion is, that had it been eight months earlier, it would have been much better. Independence was a doctrine scarce and rare even towards the conclusion of the year 1775; all our politics had been founded on the hope or expectation of making the matter up—a hope which though general on the side of America, had never entered the head or heart of the British Court. Good heavens! what volumes of thanks does America owe to Britain! What infinite obligations to the tool that fills, with paradoxical vacancy, the throne! . . . As politicians we ought not so much to ground our hopes on the reasonableness of the thing we ask, as on the

reasonableness of the person of whom we ask it: who would expect discretion from a fool, candor from a tyrant, or justice from a villain?"

So busy were the writers of the war decade with its immediate issues and so distracted by its turmoil that little else was produced. To this statement there is one notable exception, which has already been mentioned — namely, the literature which was spoken in deliberative or other assemblies. If there is any objection to calling oratory a branch of literature a long discussion may be cut short by remarking that the literary wealth of the ancient and modern world would shrink amazingly if the recorded discourse of "speaking men" were eliminated. Pens and paper are not indispensable to the expression of thoughts that appeal to mind and heart with perennial interest — and what else is literature? Moreover, some of the most beautiful and sublime of these creations have been uttered before they were written down by the speaker, as is the case with early poetry itself.

This is true with respect to much of the oratory which sprung up in the stirring period before and during the revolutionary war. An early and prominent instance was afforded by the spontaneous eloquence of Patrick Henry. He was not a person from whom preëminent literary achievement could have been expected so far as education and training could promote it. The most satisfactory solution of the quandary here suggested is to say that he was born to be an orator, as Shakespeare was born to be a dramatist. The story of his sudden rise and his triumphal career needs no repetition. His speeches for the defence and confirmation of

The Literature of Oratory.

Patrick Henry.

liberty are the first literature that the American school-boy learns by heart. Their doctrine stays with him through all the wars and in all the years of peace. But there is a drawback to this familiarity. It is unfortunate for the records of spoken thought that the best examples of it are cheapened by frequent repetition until the meaning and power of the first utterance are lost. What would the reading of Henry's immortal sentences be to a man who had not heard them caricatured every week of his schooldays, or, better, if he had never heard them at all? And how much more would they have meant if he could have been with the second convention of colonial Virginia in the old church at Richmond, listening with delight or amazement to the speaker's practical declaration of war against the foremost nation of Europe, and to the message of freedom for a people of whose future the orator himself did not dream? If all that went with that speech could have been preserved with the imperfect report of it, the literature of power would have no greater and more important example in this country. But nine parts of it are gone — gone with the thrilling voice, the overwhelming personality, the prophetic vision of the man who was most alive to the tremendous issue, and who had already heard from afar the "clanking of chains" and the "clash of resounding arms," but not with fear. The loss of liberty, not death, was to be feared. Of all this the traditions only remain, which have been gathered up as ashes in the urn of history. Nevertheless there was a day one hundred and twenty-seven years ago when heroic thoughts, arrayed in words of power, swept the doubtful and the fearful along with the hopeful and the confident in the single

purpose to find liberty or death. Therefore these potent words of the foremost orator of his time will always be ranked with the best remembered utterances in all the record of that literature which moves and inspires.

There were other orators in the South who would have had a greater fame if Henry had not outshone them.

**Other South-
ern Orators.** Richard Henry Lee was ranked with him by some who considered Lee's harmonious voice and choice diction matched only by the former's natural gifts of persuasive speech. In a measure the same might have been said of John Rutledge, Edmund Randolph, George Mason, Edmund Pendleton, and the broad-minded South Carolinian, Christopher Gadsden, who voiced the sober sentiment of the greatest number when he said: "We should stand upon the broad common ground of those natural rights that we all feel and know as men and as descendants of Englishmen. There ought to be no New England man, no New Yorker, known on the continent, but all of us Americans." George Washington was almost the only man of eminence in the South who did not distinguish himself at one time or another in the discussions which culminated in the war for independence. His part in that could excuse him from contributing to the forensic literature of the time.

While this was growing luxuriantly in a region always favorable to its development, a similar outburst occurred in the North. The efficiency of James Otis and Samuel Adams as writers was supplemented by their oral discourse. Adams was the most frequent speaker in Boston town-meetings. He spoke as a man of affairs whose opinions were of more consequence to himself and others than the phrases in which

**Northern
Orators.**

they were clothed. On ordinary topics his manner was business-like, but under the stress of a great occasion he rose to the emergency and the opportunity. With Otis the occasion was made great by the brilliance of his treatment. He made clear the character of colonial rights and asserted them with daring. In his early speech against writs of assistance John Adams called him "a flame of fire." "His torrent of impetuous eloquence bore all before him. American independence was then and there born. Every man went away ready to take arms." The next year his impassioned oratory placed him at the head of the popular party, and won for him the title of "the great incendiary of New England."

As in the South so in the North there were other speakers whose eloquence has been forgotten in the greater splendor of their statesmanship. Hamilton, Jay, John Adams, Madison, Quincy, Livingston, Morris, and Clinton were able to maintain their views with voice as well as pen, or sword, if necessity required. There is less need to call attention to their legacy to the literature of oratory, because it is known to every youth who has had to declaim in school. For this reason the best portion of our colonial production may be passed lightly over and dismissed with the remark that at least in this respect, as in another, the leaders of opinion were able to stand before kings and contend with parliaments.

Of the poets and poetry of the Revolution period so much cannot be said as of its orators and eloquence. The writhing age of rhyme was past, to be sure, with its vain conceits and fearful measures, but a classic era had not taken its place. The strain to

Revolution
Poetry.

keep up good courage is the most evident quality in the verse of war and its emphatic politics.

“We never will knock under,
 O George! we do not fear
 The rattling of your thunder,
 Nor lightening of your spear;
 Though rebels you declare us,
 We’re strangers to dismay;
 Therefore you cannot scare us
 In North America”

is the tone of a song which covered a large portion of this period under the caption of “Taxation of America.”

Philip Freneau, the principal versifier of the time, wrote in this manner of “Emancipation from British Dependence”:

“From a junto that labor for absolute power,
 Whose schemes disappointed have made them look sour;
 From the lords of the council, who fight against freedom
 Who still follow on where delusion shall lead ’em.
 “From groups at St. James’s who slight our petitions,
 And fools that are waiting for further submissions;
 From a nation whose manners are rough and abrupt,
 From scoundrels and rascals whom gold can corrupt.”

And of Prince William, afterward William IV.:

“Prince William, of the Brunswick race,
 To witness George’s sad disgrace
 The royal lad came over,
 Rebels to kill, by right divine —
 Derived from that illustrious line,
 The beggars of Hanover.
 “‘I am of royal birth, ’t is true,
 But what, my sons, can princes do,
 No armies to command?
 Cornwallis conquered and distress —
 Sir Henry Clinton grown a jest —
 I curse — and quit the land.’”

Of Eutaw Springs:

- “ At Eutaw Springs the valiant died :
 Their limbs with dust are covered o’er —
Weep on, ye springs, your fearful tide ;
 How many heroes are no more !
- “ Now rest in peace, our patriot band ;
 Though far from Nature’s limits thrown,
We trust they find a happier land,
 A brighter sunshine of their own.”

The above is as good as the best that was written and the following is not quite so bad as the worst, Burgoyne being the hero :

- “ When Jack, the King’s commander,
 Was going to his duty,
Through all the crowd he smiled and bowed
 To every blooming beauty.
- “ Then off he went to Canada,
 Next to Ticonderoga,
And quitting these away he goes
 Straightway to Saratoga.
- “ In vain they fought, in vain they fled,
 Their chief, humane and tender,
To save the rest soon thought it best
 His forces to surrender.”

Guy Humphrey’s “ Carmen Bellicosum ” has the merit of a metre unusual for the time :

- “ In their ragged regimentals
 Stood the old continentals,
 Yielding not,
When the grenadiers were lunging,
And like hail the shot fell plunging
 Cannon shot ;
 When the files
 Of the isles

From the smoky night-encampment bore the banner of the rampant
Unicorn

And grummer, grummer, grummer rolled the roll of the drummer,
Through the morn !

“ Then with eyes to the front all,
And with guns horizontal
Stood our sires ;
And the balls whistled deadly,
And in streams flashing redly
Blazed the fires ;
As the roar
On the shore,

Swept the strong battle breakers o’er the green sodded acres
Of the plain ;

And louder, louder, louder cracked the black gunpowder,
Cracking amain.

“ Then the old-fashioned colonel
Galloped through the white, infernal
Powder cloud !

And his broad sword was swinging,
And his brazen throat was ringing
Trumpet loud.
Then the blue
Bullets flew

And the trooper jackets redden at the touch of the leaden
Rifle breath ;

And rounder, rounder, rounder roared the iron six pounder
Hurling death ! ”

It is fortunate that the success of the patriot cause did not depend upon the genius of its poets. Still, poor as they were, their songs were popular, and cheered the hearts of the yeomen, who won at last in spite of regular troops and irregular verses.

As the close of the colonial period is reached, a backward glance over the dry places of literature through which we have passed has its compensations. A varying

progress is discernible from the barrenness of a diarizing age through the narrowness of a dogmatic and the virulence of controversial and polemic periods to the broader and more generous sympathies of ^{Retro-}spective. outer-world ideas, and at length into a higher sphere of independence in political thought and its expression. Crudeness and affectation, pedantry and contortion had their day, and finally yielded to more sensible methods in prose and the beginning of a true poetic spirit in verse. How much more might have been accomplished, and how much earlier, if the forefathers had not persistently turned their backs upon contemporary letters in England and followed homespun patterns with exclusive devotion, is a question which may be discussed elsewhere but for which there is no room here. No one is more willing than the present writer to grant all that can be claimed for the foundation work which was done by the Pilgrims and Puritans and their successors in the colonial period in the direction of political righteousness, notwithstanding their backward look to the Pentateuch for their methods of administration. But founding an empire or a republic is not making a literature. If it is objected that they were too busy about the one to attend to the other, it may be answered that ministers and magistrates and others found leisure to write volumes of literature, such as it was. Accordingly it is impossible to agree with those writers who have discovered great achievement in what the colonists wrote for the first hundred and fifty years, since, measured by the standard of contemporary English writings, the disparity between the two is painfully apparent. If it be urged that the colonists were removed from English influences by the width of the Atlantic, it must be admitted

that ships came across in from three to six weeks, bringing up-to-date fashions and fabrics, and the best of teas, spices, and wines. Invoices show that books also came with other luxuries, but not the books which were read in England then that are called classic now. Instead, as booksellers' inventories and lists of academic and private libraries reveal, importations were chiefly of dreary tomes of sectarian theology, largely in Latin, and such other treatises and tracts as may be found, for instance, in the library catalogue of the younger Winthrop, a representative man of letters in his day. Such books as people read they wrote, often incorporating an Hebraic element paralleled by the Israelitish names of their sons and daughters for three generations, and entailed for three more. These domestic products were read and imitated more even than the transatlantic volumes they imported, and at one time literary manner went from bad to worse. When Franklin broke with the tradition of the elders — the first man of letters to deserve the name, foremost also in science and the higher politics, he opened the door to contemporary English literature. The beginnings of a creditable American literature were to follow with the independence of the nation, though not by boastful revolt from English models, nor again by servile imitation of them. These inevitable elements, however, were to disappear with the growth of a cosmopolitan spirit and a larger hospitality towards outland literatures. It is by reviewing these later achievements rather than those of provincial centuries that better reasons for complacency will be discovered.

The National Period

1783-1902

"The time will arrive when the Americans as a people will take pride in a literature of their own, and realize that a National Literature is a National Power."

WILLIAM L. PAULDING.

XIII

POLITICAL WRITERS OF THE CRITICAL PERIOD

READERS who have followed the growth of American letters in chapters on the colonial period should know that what was written between 1607 and 1783

was in a sense preparatory to the later development of our literature. It began with the "advertisements" of settlers at Jamestown and Plymouth to the countrymen they had left behind in England with a view to induce further immigration. Diaries and journals and annals of colonial life followed, furnishing the materials for future histories. A theocratic form of government next inspired a theological literature full of controversy, which was succeeded by political writings of marked vigor and ability as the question of separation from Great Britain came to the front. Interspersed with these prose writings was a by-product of verse, in psalms, eulogies, and dirges at first, and finally in patriotic or loyalist ballads. In both prose and verse styles of diction prevailed which were sometimes Hebraic and sometimes fantastic, but commonly artificial, except when in the later years strong emotions made writers forget themselves and the fashion of their age. This was particularly the case in the revolution period, when fiery pamphleteering cleared the air of nonsense and taught men to say what they meant. Even then there was at times some of

Résumé.

the stateliness of colonial manners and the gorgeousness of the continental costume in deliberate writing.

There was no immediate change in literary habits when the independence of the colonies was established in 1783.

Transition
Gradual.

A people could not adjust themselves to a new condition of liberty in a day or year after their life of a century and three-quarters as subject provinces. Neither could they get out of the ruts of thought and expression in which they had been brought up. Moreover, in the five years succeeding the end of the war there were causes which continued to literature the complexion it had during the war. If it was controversial then, when the majority were for freedom from British rule, what could be expected when opinion was much divided about the form of government that should be adopted? Indeed, opposition and disputation had become chronic. The Declaration of Independence was passed with difficulty; the war was prolonged by dissent and disagreement, and now the plan of union was to be five years in getting itself adjusted to provincial notions.

This process made a continuation of political literature inevitable. Men who eight years before dropped their pens and picked up swords now hung these over the fireplace and returned to their desks. Many who had in these years of fighting kept up a wordy war protracted it until the Constitution was adopted, believing that the fruit of all the sacrifice made would be lost with the rejection of their own theories of government. Hence followed a new instalment of political literature whose importance in tiding the new nation over dangerous shoals cannot be overestimated.

The men who contributed to it were principally those

who had guided the war to its successful issue. There was enough opposition among them to give zest and point to the writings of all in discussing the question of changing the confederacy to a union of states. The leaders in this great debate were Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, and Thomas Jefferson on the side of the established government, such as it was, which had carried on the war after its own fashion. But its faults were known. The perils of the proposed system were not known. Henry spoke for the others when he said: "This proposal of altering our federal government is of a most alarming nature; make the best of this new government — say it is composed by anything but inspiration — you ought to be extremely cautious, watchful, jealous of your liberty; for instead of securing your rights you may lose them forever. If a wrong step be now made, the republic may be lost forever . . . and tyranny must and will arise." The views of Adams and Jefferson were similar, and their defence of them constitutes a part of their works and of the best literature of the period.

On the other side were ranged Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison as leaders of the party for the adoption of the Constitution. With them were associated George Washington, John Adams, Fisher Ames, Thomas Paine, Albert Gallatin, John Marshall, and Joseph Story. The first three — Hamilton, Jay, and Madison — made the "Federalist" famous as the leading collection of political writings in this long and violent controversy. The Constitution had been called a "triple-headed monster" and as "deep and wicked a conspiracy as ever was invented in the darkest ages against the liberties of a free people." Evidently

Political
Controversy.

The
"Federalist."

some one must arise to its defence and explanation. Hamilton undertook this, with the help of Madison and Jay, in eighty-five short essays, published in the "Independent Gazetteer of New York" in 1787-8, of which Hamilton himself wrote fifty-one. They did for the adoption of the Constitution what Paine's essays did for the Declaration of Independence. The writers did not have the creation of literature in mind so much as of a new government. Incidentally they accomplished the first while laboring with all their might for the second, producing not only "the most profound and suggestive series of papers on government that has ever been written," but also a group of writings which reflect the spirit of liberty guided and controlled by the wisest law. In addition, the collection has literary values which cannot be overlooked. The clearness and directness of the opening article declare in unmistakable terms the purpose of the writer and the importance of the question to be discussed. They recall the positiveness of the Declaration of Independence.

"After an unequivocal experience of the inefficacy of the subsisting federal government, you are called upon to deliberate on a new Constitution for the United States of America. The subject speaks its own importance; comprehending in its consequences nothing less than the existence of the union, the safety and welfare of the parts of which it is composed, the fate of an empire in many respects the most interesting in the world. It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force.

The crisis at which we are arrived may with propriety be regarded as the era in which that decision is to be made; and a wrong election of the part we shall act, may, in this view, deserve to be considered as the general misfortune of mankind. . . . I propose, in a series of papers, to discuss the following interesting particulars — The utility of the UNION to your political prosperity — The insufficiency of the present Confederation to preserve that Union — The necessity of a government, at least equally energetic with the one proposed, to the attainment of this object — The conformity of the proposed Constitution to the true principles of republican government — Its analogy to your own State Constitution — and lastly The additional security which its adoption will afford to the preservation of that species of government, to liberty, and to property.”

After this outline of the general course the discussion would take, the three writers, over the common signature of “Publius,” take up such topics as the “Dangers from foreign force and influence;” “The Union as a safeguard against domestic faction and insurrection;” “The Militia;” “Taxation;” “House of Representatives;” “The Executive and Judiciary;” “Powers vested in the Union.” These and other matters are presented fully, sometimes in several papers, and so clearly that the citizen of that day had little difficulty in understanding the writer’s grounds for his appeal, an appeal which in the end was effective beyond the immediate constituency addressed.

The man who could write the above Introduction in the cabin of a river sloop had his subject well in hand, to say the least. He also had knowledge of the times sufficient to recognize that the period was a critical one in the life of the nation, and that imperialism threatened its existence on one side and anarchy on the other. His own aim was to call men away from the separatism and individual-

ism which had been bred in and in from colonial beginnings in colonial seclusion and exclusiveness, now cropping out in the rights which each new state desired to keep, surrendering little or nothing to that union of all which alone had brought them through recent perils. He frankly admits that he is on the side of this union, a view of affairs not so familiar then as it is now, and regarded by many with doubt and suspicion. They considered thirteen states along the coast as too many to be held together or, if possible, that centralization of government would end in imperialism. Accordingly Hamilton proposes to meet their objections and to show the utility of union, the insufficiency of the present confederation, the necessity of a stronger government, the conformity of the Constitution to republican principles, the additional security it will afford to liberty and to property, and the inevitable dismemberment that would follow a rejection of the proposed Constitution.

It is impracticable, of course, to review the discussion of these vital topics here even in outline. It must be read to appreciate the wisdom of its views and the dignity and moderation with which they are presented. Much may be argued for the good sense of a people to whom such a series of articles could be addressed with the expectation that they would be carefully read and thoughtfully pondered. That they were so received is evident from their continuation through eighty-five numbers and their repeated issue in edition after edition when they were completed. That they were successful in their purpose is established by the fact that the particular community to which they were addressed was induced to do that which the majority had informally declared it would

not do; and the people of New York, accepting this interpretation of the Constitution as true, determined to favor its establishment between their own state and the other states of the Union. The "Federalist" had a similar efficacy wherever it was read. The men who wrote it were Americans rather than provincials. They were statesmen and foremost thinkers in a time which called for profound and earnest reflection on questions of immense consequence. Other papers were written by their peers in other journals, but this collection is preëminent among them all. It marked the culmination of political writing in an age of the highest political thought and action. It was the work of the giants which were in those days, who were also framers of the Constitution itself.

Accordingly, it has seemed imperative to call particular attention to a production which is sometimes spoken of as a series of newspaper articles, or as a partisan view of a question that has long since been settled. That these articles were not ephemeral is shown by their repeated reproduction to the present day in twenty editions. That they are something more than a Whig document is evidenced by the fact that they are the best interpreters of the intents and purposes which the builders of the nation had when they framed the Constitution of the United States. This instrument itself cannot be well understood without the contemporary commentary of the "Federalist."

Reference has already been made to the writings of the group of statesmen who were both the product of this critical period and the agents in bringing it about. They were as a rule voluminous writers. When the few books which were at their command

Other Political Writers.

are considered, as compared with present accumulations, their creative resources are remarkable. They pondered diligently and wrote continuously. As a consequence their works fill volumes. These have not been perused or often consulted by the average reader in the latter part of the century following their production as they were in the former, but, with the revival of interest in American history and literature, and the growing habit of investigating original documents and writings, the worth of them will be rediscovered. Especially to those who incline to a study of the highest political science and the nature of republican forms of government will these writings of the founders of our own be a literature in which they may take both delight and pride. It was this which first won attention to us in other countries. In England, because the loss of colonies was impending; on the continent of Europe, because of a widespread sympathy with the cause which was so clearly stated and ably defended. The new nation had not yet attained to the graces of literature, but the strength and vigor which ought to precede these were abundant. The foundations of empire and of letters were laid simultaneously by Franklin and Adams and Otis, by Jefferson and Henry and Hamilton, by John Adams and Quincy Adams, by Paine and Marshall, and the rest of the constellation of publicists which ruled in the ascendant at the birth of the nation. To them the student of constitutional history will turn as to the authors of the best of constitutions, and the student of letters as to writers of a literature political in its character, but as diversified in its form as the personality of its makers.

As in a former chapter on some of the pre-revolution writers, it may be added that the works of the above-

mentioned statesmen are accessible in most public libraries in one or more editions. Tables of contents and indexes will refer readers to such topics as may be of particular interest. Biographical accounts are abundant in the volumes of the American Statesmen series and elsewhere.

XIV

EPICS AND DRAMAS

THE writings of statesmen in the closing period of the eighteenth century were not equalled by other contemporary literature. There was no such absorbing motive in other departments to give the unconsciousness of self in which best results are produced. Few periods have had such an overpowering stimulus to intense yet logical exposition of privileges which are essential to constitutional liberty. The literature which resulted ought to have been and was exceptional prose.

The verse which accompanied it was exceptional too, but not in the same way. All ballads were of course inspired by patriotic or loyalist sentiments. Even when Trumbull's
"McFingal." John Trumbull's long poem, "McFingal," appeared it could be referred to the same kind of inspiration. Still, the channel in which the patriotism of the youthful verse-maker flowed was inevitably narrowed by its prevailing satire. This was effective, as no one can deny, and by its mirth-provoking sallies did good service for a good cause. It is not to so much purpose to inquire here who furnished the copy which he followed with greater or less fidelity — whether Hudibras, Combe, or some other — as to know that the help furnished was not after the manner nor in the degree of the aid lent by the political prose of the day. A few lines of it will give the pitch and tone, rhyme and metre.

“Great Squire McFingal,” the Tory magistrate, is started in this manner :

“His high descent our heralds trace
To Ossian’s famed Fingalian race.
For though their name some part may lack
Old Fingal spelt it with a Mac;
Which great McPherson, with submission
We hope will add, the next edition.
His fathers flourish’d in the Highlands
Of Scotia’s fog-benighted islands;
Whence gained our Squire two gifts by right,
Rebellion and the Second-sight.
Thus stored with intellectual riches,
Skilled was our Squire in making speeches,
Where strength of brain united centers
With strength of lungs surpassing Stentor’s.”

These gifts he exercises at the gathering place of the clans — the meeting-house and in town-meeting.

“And now the town was summoned greeting,
To grand parading of town-meeting;
To show that strangers might appall,
As Rome’s grave senate did the Gaul.
High o’er the rout, on pulpit stairs,
Like den of thieves in house of prayers,
(That house, which loth a rule to break,
Serv’d heav’n but one day in a week,
Open the rest for all supplies
Of news and politics and lies.)
Stood forth the constable and bore
His staff, like Merc’ry’s wand of yore,
Wav’d potent round, the peace to keep,
As that laid dead men’s souls to sleep.
Above and near the hermitic staff,
The moderator’s upper half,
In grandeur o’er the cushion bow’d,
Like Sol half-seen behind a cloud.
Beneath stood voters of all colours,
Whigs, Tories, orators and bawlers,

With ev'ry tongue in either faction,
 Prepar'd, like minute-men, for action;
 Where truth and falsehood, wrong and right,
 Drew all their legions out to fight;
 With equal uproar, scarcely rave,
 Opposing winds in Æolus' cave.
 Such dialogues with earnest face
 Held never Balaam with his ass."

As the debate gets high

" . . . our Squire

No longer could contain his ire ;
 And rising 'midst applauding Tories,
 Thus vented wrath upon Honorius.

"Quoth he, 'T is wondrous what strange stuff
 Your Whig's-heads are compounded of ;
 Which force of logic cannot pierce
 Nor syllogistic carte and tierce,
 Nor weight of scripture or of reason,
 Suffice to make the least impression.
 Ye prate and beg and steal the question ;
 And when your boasted arguings fail,
 Strait leave all reas'ning off, to rail.

" 'About Rebellion make a pother,
 From one end of the land to th' other,
 And yet gain'd fewer pros'lyte Whigs,
 Than old St. Anth'ny 'mongst the pigs ;
 And chang'd not half so many vicious
 As Austin, when he preach'd to fishes ;
 Who, throng'd to hear, the legend tells,
 Were edified and wagg'd their tails ;
 But scarce you'd prove it, if you tried,
 That e'er one Whig was edified.' "

In this style the valiant Squire storms on for three hundred lines with interruptions enough from the Whig Honorius to keep his eloquence at concert pitch,

"In true sublime of scarecrow style."

Indeed this line of the poet's might be applied to much of his amusing and truly patriotic effusion, had not his friend President Dwight assured the public that "without any partiality, *McFingal* is not inferior in wit and humor to *Hudibras*; and in every other respect is superior. . . . The versification is far better, the poetry is in several instances in a good degree elegant, and in some even sublime." The question between contemporary commendation and criticism and that of the present day is as to the kind of sublimity, and if it is at all like that which the poet attributed to Judge Sewall in the line last quoted. It should not be forgotten, however, that these Yale men, Trumbull, Dwight, Barlow, and the rest, were the first to give a fresh impulse to the literature of the new nation, and if their ambition outran their performance it was a commendable quality, even if the levels in which it ran were sometimes too high or too low.

Nothing but the controversy which had its participants on both sides, in England as well as in America, could have carried this mock heroic performance through several editions. Besides, the literary taste of the time in poetics was not far above this plane. We can be grateful to the author for winning supporters whom statesmen could not; but it is not necessary on this account to call him an eminent poet.

However, he did not aspire to write an epic, as two of his contemporaries did. But they had their sense of obligation as citizens and men of letters in the young America that had just been released from old England. A new and free nation of almost boundless expanse, with limitless prospects and high hopes, it was urged, should have a commensurate literature, or the beginning of it, at least.

A patriotic aspiration of this kind must have impelled Timothy Dwight, president of Yale College, to undertake, in 1785, his "Conquest of Canaan," the first Dwight's "Conquest of Canaan." American epic, as the author calls it. The resemblance it bears to those which had preceded it, notably the "Iliad" and "Paradise Lost," consists largely in the antiquity of the subject. Differences must be explained by saying that Homer, and Virgil, and Milton were born to be poets, as the American was born to be a college president and a diligent and persevering versifier. Genius is not always the faculty of taking pains. If it were, the "Conquest of Canaan" would not practically have perished in a hundred years. Nevertheless it is worth reading — some of it. Biblical students will be pleased to note what side lights can be thrown upon the sacred story by a poetic imagination, if they read as far as the eleventh book. The crookedness of Haniel, the loves of Irad and Selima, of Elam and Mina, the ghost of Herzon, the prowess of Jabin, the valor of Zimri, are for the modern reader what the miracle and mystery plays were to the dark ages. Modern battlefields and revolutionary generals are somewhat belated actors, but the heroes just returned from Monmouth and Yorktown did not object to being in company with Caleb and Joshua. They read their Bibles as diligently as their descendants peruse a Sunday newspaper; and they understood a scriptural allusion or an Old Testament hero a great deal better. And as for the versification, the rhymes of Dwight were as good in their esteem as Pope's translation of the "Iliad," and his characters not inferior to Milton's in their biblical derivation. It was a book for the age by a counsellor of statesmen and a theologian. He, if any

one, could meet the demands of the youthful nation for an epic of its own, as he had been the first to give it the name "Columbia." Moreover, a note of progress might be discerned from one to the other of three epics, and a humanistic element could be found in the "Conquest" which was not in the "Iliad" or in "Paradise Lost." Even the oratory of the Argive leaders or that of Satan himself is at least recalled by Caleb's address to the assembled host :

"The great concluding day
Now calls to arms, and heaven directs the way ;
What though unnumbered hosts against us rise,
And with proud madness brave insulted skies ;
Shall cumbrous throngs the meanest arm dismay ?
Or one base thought disdain the glorious day ?
Think how bold Abraham swept the midnight plain,
While realms opposed and millions fought in vain.
If slaves, or men, this day your hands decide,
The scorn of nations, or the world's great pride ;
Empire and bondage in your bosoms lie ;
'T is yours to triumph or 't is ours to die."

Our great and greater grandfathers revelled in this, and were not ashamed to liken it to the Homer of Pope and to the verse of Milton. In the battle before Ai, Book VI., the poet's historic imagination oscillates between Canaan and Connecticut :

"The hero spoke ; and urged by passion's force,
On furious Carmi bent his aged course ;
Awful in gleam of arms, the chiefs appear,
Here the bold youth, the white-haired hero there :
But ere his sword great Herzon could extend,
Or circling bands their ancient chief defend,
A long, bright lance his wary foe beheld,
And snatch'd it glittering on the bloody field ;

Swift through the hero's side he forced the steel;
 Pierced to the heart, the aged warrior fell;
 There lay, a corse, bespread with purple stains,
 The form, that triumphed on a hundred plains.

"On Ridgefield's hills, to shame, to virtue dead,
 Thus dastard bands the foe inglorious fled;
 When Wooster singly braved the deathful ground,
 Fir'd hosts in vain and met the fatal wound.
 In dangers born, to arms in childhood train'd,
 From Gallia's heroes many a palm he gain'd
 With freedom's sacred name serenely glow'd
 For justice arm'd, and fought the field for God."

This is Homeric, Hebraic, and patriotic, and therefore was poetic to our forefathers. So was the following from Book VII.:

"So frowned dread night on Abraham's fatal plain
 When thou, Montgomery, pride of chiefs, was slain.
 Spare, sons of freedom, spare that generous tear;
 To heaven resign, nor name the doom severe.
 Great, brave, and just to ward Columbia's shame,
 He hunted toil in fields of growing fame;
 Alive, fair Victory ne'er forsook his side;
 He lived in triumph and in glory died.
 Glued to his side, t' untimely fate a prey,
 There bright Macpherson breath'd his life away."

The climax or anti-climax was reached when Joel Barlow wrote his "Vision of Columbus," afterward developed into the "Columbiad." The very title was sublimated American, and the poem was regarded as a "tremendous epic" in its day. With mitigated modesty the writer declares that he shall not try to prove that he has written an epic poem. Nevertheless he ranks the "Iliad" and the "Æneid" in the same class with his own "Columbiad," which he sends forth "with no other concern than what arises

Barlow's
 "Vision of
 Columbus."

from the most pure and ardent desire of doing good to the country."

Barlow was a type of the cultivated and patriotic young American of his day. He belonged to the Dwight-Trumbull knot of young men in Yale College who were the first in the country to break away from the traditions of the elders and devote themselves to a study of outland literature in the English classics. In vacations he shouldered a musket and fought bravely with the Massachusetts militia in the opening battles of the Revolution. His Commencement part in 1778 was a poem on "The Prospect of Peace," hopeful, enthusiastic, expansive, prophetic:

"What wide extent her waving ensigns claim,
Lands yet unknown and streams without a name."

As there was a shortage of chaplains in the army, the young law student crammed himself with enough divinity in six weeks for camp purposes, and with his friend Dwight went in and out among the troops, animating and encouraging them by patriotic addresses and odes. Turning editor — and doctor of Watt's version of the psalms to make them fit the regnant theology — he meditated and composed by turns "The Vision," which was received with applause by friends and reprinted in London and Paris. It anticipated by a year the one-sided philanthropy and erratic enthusiasm of the French Revolution, and in consequence the author, when he arrived in France, was welcome to give his "Advice to Privileged Orders," and follow it with his poem on the "Conspiracy of Kings."

The design of Barlow's masterpiece, "The Columbiad," evolved from "The Vision," was to give an historical view of events from the time of Columbus to that of

Washington, as foreseen by the great discoverer from his prison in Spain. Conducted by Hesper to the Mount of Vision, he takes a long lesson in American geography and the history of Mexico and Peru. The story of colonization by Raleigh and others follows, preparing the way for the old French and the Revolutionary wars. Officers in the latter are thus signalized :

"The Columbiad."

"Here stood stern Putnam, scored with ancient scars,
The living records of his country's wars ;
Wayne, like a moving tower, assumes his post,
Fires the whole field and is himself a host.
Bland, Moyland, Sheldon, the long lines enforce
With light arm'd scouts, with solid squares of horse.
And Knox from his full park to battle brings
His brazen tubes, the last resort of kings.
When at his word the carbon cloud shall rise
And well-aimed thunders rock the shores and skies."

An imagined catastrophe is reached at Yorktown :

"But while the fusing fireballs scorch the sky,
Their mining arts the stanch besiegers ply,
Delve from the bank of York and gallery far,
Deep subterranean, to the mount of war ;
Beneath the ditch, thro' rocks and fens they go,
Scoop the dark chamber plumb beneath the foe ;
There lodge their tons of powder and retire,
Mure the dread passage, wave the fatal fire.
Send a swift messenger to warn the foe
To seek his safety and the post forego."

As he sends back a taunting reply this happens :

"Burst with the blast the reeling mountain roars,
Heaves, labors, boils and through the concave pours
His flaming contents high ; he chokes the air
With all his warriors and their works of war ;
Guns, bastions, magazines, confounded fly,
Vault wide their fresh explosions o'er the sky,
Incumber each far camp and plow profound
With their rude fragments every neighboring ground."

After this burst it is not strange that the big guns for coast defence were called Columbiads. Indeed, Barlow's theory was that the modern epic poet had an advantage over the ancient "in respect to the names, number and variety of weapons used in war; and that the shock of modern armies is more sonorous and more discoloring to the face of nature," and he exclaims, "What might not Homer have done if he had had the battle of Blenheim to describe!" To which may be added, What might not Barlow have done armed with a modern dictionary at the battle of Gettysburg!

And yet when he is giving generous praise to his coterie he descends to unstrained diction:

"See Trumbull lead the train; his skilful hand
Hurls the keen darts of satire round the land.
Pride, knavery, dulness, feel his mortal stings,
And listening virtue triumphs while he sings.

"On wings of faith to elevate the soul,
Beyond the bourn of earth's benighted pole,
For Dwight's high harp the Epic Muse sublime
Hails her new empire in the western clime."

The apotheosis of Progress occurs in the Apocalypse of Barlow to Columbus in the last book:

"From Mohawk's mouth, far westing with the sun,
Through all the midlands recent channels run,
Tap the redundant lakes, the broad hills brave,
And Hudson marry with Missouri's wave.
From dim Superior, whose uncounted sails
Shade his full seas and bosom all his gales,
New paths unfolding seek Mackenzie's tide,
And towns and empires rise along their side.
Slave's crystal highways all his north adorn
Like coruscations from the boreal morn."

Of this tonitrous composition the modern reader might weary unless he should get interested in the fortunes of

the Peruvian Inca, Capac, in the third book. By that time he will have had what a modern essayist calls a "struggle with those merciful tendencies in the human organization which safely wrap the overwhelmed mind in the blessedness of sleep." In this effort to keep awake he will be helped now and then by such startling lines as these:

"And suns infulminate the stormful sky;"

"Commercing squadrons o'er the billows bound;"

"When one great cosmogyre has proved their spheres;"

and other such lines, which, in Barlow's own words are:

"Like coruscations from the boreal morn."

Meantime it must be remembered that these "tonations" were composed for the beginning-of-the-century generation which lived a hundred years ago. The measure and the rhyme were satisfactory, and the big word stood for its idea of the sublime. If not quite comprehended, the mystery and awe were all the greater, and so were the reputation of the poet and the sale of his verse. Still, it is to be feared that this rhymers' "Hasty Pudding," composed far from his New England home, in Switzerland, had a longer popularity than his ambitious epic.

It was in this post-revolution period that the first intimation of a submerged dramatic tendency bubbled up to the surface from the ooze where it was sunk one hundred and fifty years before. Puritan laws and frowns had kept it out of sight and hearing thus far. Hospitable Virginia had allowed the "Merchant of Venice" to be acted by professionals in Williamsburg as early as 1752, and Farquhar's "Beaux's Stratagem" was played the same year at Annapolis, in the first American theatre, which was followed by a second,

Rise of American Drama.

built in New York the next year, and another in Philadelphia six years later. But in Massachusetts previous to 1792 players appeared on the stage at the risk of arrest. Only in unorthodox Rhode Island, and under the patronage of planters who came to Newport, were they safe within the bounds of New England. As early as 1765 Thomas Godfrey of Philadelphia had peeped in a closet drama, entitled, "The Prince of Parthia," but Royall Tyler of New York was the first domestic play-writer to put a piece upon the stage. He called it "The Contrast," possibly with reference to the change in public sentiment since Massachusetts enacted an ordinance, in imitation of Cromwell's parliament in 1642, abolishing theatres. This act was annulled in England fourteen years later, but here there was no relenting until one hundred and seventy years after the Pilgrims came to Plymouth. Under such a régime not much could be expected of American dramatic talent. When at length it dared to appear on the boards it seemed not to the manner born. The tragedy was high enough and the comedy low enough, but the Elizabethan dramatist, or even the Restoration playwright, had not accompanied the star of empire westward. Have they yet arrived?

Still there were home-made plays which pleased provincials by their local color and hits, and as good a beginning was made as could be expected in a climate which ranged from temperate to frigid in the matter of dramatics. What need was there of tragedy representation in old colony days when the genuine article could be had by standing in front of the meeting-house near the whipping-post, stocks, and pillory, or by climbing the hill where the gallows loomed stark against a wintry sky?

And as for comedy, it might be had whenever a pirate crew was brought ashore or a knot of witches convicted. The Puritan boy was not without his diversions. For a while he had no need of theatre or circus. When, however, his primitive entertainments went out of fashion it was unfair to expect counterfeits to take their place all at once or to be satisfactory. Had not everything fictitious been sternly forbidden and painfully discouraged? Accordingly, the early American drama should not be scrutinized too sharply nor expected too soon.

Tyler, Dunlap, and Payne made the best beginning they could with such plays as "May Day in New York," "The Father of an Only Child," "Brutus," and "Therese," all of which were appreciated at home and some in London. Dunlap's interlude of "Danby's Return" drew unaccustomed laughter from the grave Washington and sympathetic merriment from all who were watching to see how he would take an allusion to himself. But no one unearths these old provincial tragedies and comedies for present reading, and a company which should venture to reproduce them would not undertake their repetition a second night. Their flavor is gone with the generation for which they were written.

XV

EARLY FICTION

FICTION followed the drama in America, as elsewhere. Also, as in the case of the drama, its beginnings were feeble.

Susanna Haswell came to Nantasket, Massachusetts, as a child with her father, a British naval officer, in 1766. Inclined to literary pursuits, she was encouraged by James Otis and others, and in 1786 Susanna Rowson. wrote "Victoria," a two-volume story from real life, marrying the same year William Rowson of London, trumpeter in the Horse Guards. Two years after, she published "The Inquisitor," a three-decker in the manner of Laurence Sterne, and returned to England. There, in 1790, she issued "Charlotte Temple, a Tale of Truth," and came back to the United States three years afterward. It is the last story, reissued here in 1794, and sometimes called the first American novel, that has survived the earlier. It was as little a creation of the imagination as were the names of the principal characters, Charlotte Temple being Charlotte Stanley, and John Montraville being John Montessor. But the book was a great success in its day. Twenty-five hundred copies were sold within a few years. Its popularity was long-lived, and as late as 1892 it was republished in paper covers and entered as "second-class matter" at the New York postoffice with an irony that was presumably unconscious. However, it was not

considered second-class one hundred and ten years ago, when our grandmothers sighed and wept over it. The plot is simple and the story as old as the captivating fascination of brass buttons and epaulettes. A British officer, bound for the American war, entices a schoolgirl to share his fortunes. She trusts in the usual vows of fidelity. Both belonged to the nobility. That was the English side of the story. The American was the customary sequence of desertion, disgrace, and death; all of it told in a style that never was on land or sea, except in an eighteenth century novel.

“‘Where is Charlotte?’ said he. ‘Why does not my child come to welcome her doting parent?’

“‘Be composed, my dear sir,’ said Mme. Du Pont. ‘Do not frighten yourself unnecessarily. She is not in the house at present, but, as mademoiselle is undoubtedly with her, she will speedily return in safety and I hope they will both be able to account for this unseasonable absence in such a manner as shall remove our present uneasiness.’

“‘Madame,’ cried the old man with an angry look, ‘has my child been accustomed to go out without leave, with no other company or protection than that Frenchwoman? Pardon me, madame, I mean no reflections on your country, but I never did like Madame La Rue; I think she is a very improper person to be intrusted with the care of such a girl as Charlotte Temple, or to be suffered to take her from under your immediate protection.’

“‘You wrong me, Mr. Eldridge,’ said she, ‘if you suppose I have ever permitted your grand-daughter to go out, unless with other ladies. I would to Heaven I could form any probable conjecture concerning her absence this morning, but it is a mystery to me, which her return can alone unravel.’

“As Madame Du Pont read these cruel lines, she turned pale as ashes, her limbs trembled, and she was forced to call for

a glass of water. She loved Charlotte truly ; and when she reflected on the innocence and gentleness of her disposition, she concluded that it must have been the advice and machinations of La Rue which led her to this imprudent action.

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"The whole truth now rushed in at once upon Mr. Eldridge's mind. A violent gush of grief in some measure relieved him, and after several vain attempts he at length assumed sufficient composure to read the note."

And so on through thirty-five chapters, each interlocutor waiting his turn and adjusting himself, his pose, vocabulary, and punctuation to stage effects of melodramatic intensity. It was the theatrical age of fiction. People who were at home reading a novel instead of going to the play demanded that it be illumined by footlights and be enlivened by something of the rant they had lately heard on the boards. Hence much of ceremonious and unnatural orotundity and chapters headed: "Which people void of feeling need not read," meaning, "If you have tears to shed, prepare to shed them now." This was taken as a stage direction by readers and complied with to the letter. They sighed and wept to order.

It should be said in parenthesis that this sentimentality struck Mrs. Tabitha Tenny years afterward very much as Richardson's "Pamela" affected Fielding, and she followed the tearful novelist afar with a counter-irritant entitled "Female Quixotism: Exhibited in the Romantic Opinions and Extravagant Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon," a young woman whose devotion to trashy novels determines her to become some sort of a heroine. Her first step is to refuse a desirable suitor, after whom follow several undesirable ones and adventures more ridiculous than romantic.

Rescued from sacrificing herself and her fortune to a serving man, she finally has an attack of common sense, which lasts through the remainder of her life.

Mrs. Rowson found that the demand for lachrymose novels was not greatly diminished by this antidote, especially if relieved by plays, songs, tales, and even the school books which she continued to write until her demise in Boston in 1824.

Two men took up the new literary trade almost simultaneously, Henry Hugh Brackenridge getting the start of Charles Brockden Brown by a year only in his Bracken-
ridge. "Modern Chivalry." A graduate of Princeton in the class with James Madison and Philip Freneau, it is not strange that the young lawyer entered into the arena of politics early and took his literary capability with him as an assistant. The experiences he passed through in the whisky insurrection of 1794 furnished material for the above story with the sub-title of the "Adventures of Captain Farrago and Teague O'Regan, His Servant," the first part being published at Pittsburg in 1796, and the second ten years later. Of this book it used to be said that although the fame of it had not reached Europe, no traveller in the West by the name of Brackenridge ever failed to be asked if he was related to the author of "Modern Chivalry." If he happened to be, hospitality and horses were at his command. The story smacked of border life, if it did not have the odor of a tavern tumbler about it, since the writer did not have so utter an abhorrence of moonshiners as the excisemen did. Altogether, it conveyed a useful lesson to a rough and raw population who had just acquired the new and dangerous possession of freedom and were handling it carelessly, not knowing that it

was loaded. Teague O'Regan, Sancho Panza to Captain Farrago, has as great difficulty to keep out of office as his illustrious prototype had to get in. At any moment he might find himself a member of a philosophical society, of the legislature, or an association of clergymen. Societies of colonial and other wars had not then been established or he might have fared still worse. At length he has greatness thrust upon him, and eventually tar and feathers, as collector of the excise among the whisky stills of the Alleghanies. By all of which it may be observed that politics was not in pulpits alone, but in literature as well in the early days of the republic.

Brockden Brown's novels were a nearer approach to a purely literary performance. A Philadelphia youth of studious ways, having a mind divided between practical views and an eccentric fancy, he abandoned law for literature and became the first in this country to pursue letters as a profession. Recovering speedily from an attack of the epic epidemic then prevailing, he began to cultivate fiction — pure but not simple.

Brockden
Brown.

It was his misfortune to be caught in New York in the plague year of 1798, when the yellow fever was desolating the city. His nearest friend was taken, but he was left to describe the horrors of the pestilence in books which are yellow with fever and black with death. Besides, there is in them a large accompaniment of the preternatural — ventriloquism, somnambulism, and spiritism — uncanny agencies to have in the house, but convenient in a novel, especially when plots get so complicated that the author cannot recall every knot that he has tied, as was sometimes the case with this one. However, a writer who produced so much in so short a time ought not to be

taken to task for not keeping all his threads straight and well in hand. Six novels in three years, and three of them in one year, is a feat to justify the employment of the supernatural. "Wieland" in 1798, "Ormond" in 1799, "Arthur Mervyn" in 1800, "Edgar Huntley," "Clara Howard," and "Jane Talbot" in 1801 formed a pyrotechnic display of romance worthy to celebrate the going out of the eighteenth century and the coming in of the nineteenth. Moreover, there was no lack of unearthly colors in this flaming apotheosis of life and death, nor of visible and invisible hands to manage the catastrophe. Note this highlight for example:

"Death seemed to hover over this scene, and I dreaded that the floating pestilence had already lighted on my frame. I approached a house before which stood a hearse. Presently a coffin borne by two men issued from the house. One of them, as he assisted in thrusting the coffin into the cavity provided for it, said: 'I'll be d—d if I think the poor dog was quite dead. It was n't the fever that ailed him, but the sight of the girl and her mother on the floor. It was n't quite right to put him in his coffin before the breath was fairly gone. I thought the last look he gave me told me to stay a few minutes.'

"'Pshaw! He could not live,' said the other. 'The sooner dead the better for him, as well as for us. Did you mark how he eyed us when we carried away his wife and daughter?'"

Here is another:

"Welbeck put his hands to his head and exclaimed, 'Curses on thy lips, infernal messenger! Chant elsewhere thy rueful ditty! Vanish! if thou wouldst not feel in thy heart fangs red with blood less guilty than thine!'

"'How dare you thrust yourself upon my privacy? Why am I not alone? Fly! and let my miseries want at least the aggravation of beholding their author. My eyes loathe the

sight of thee! My heart would suffocate thee with its own bitterness! Begone!

“‘Thank thy fate, youth, that my hands are tied up by my scorn; thank thy fate that no weapon is within reach. I disdain to take thy life. Go, and let thy fidelity to the confidence I have placed in thee be inviolate. Thou canst betray the secrets that are lodged in thy bosom, and rob me of the comfort of reflecting that my guilt is known to but one among the living.’”

And one more:

“Shuddering, I dashed myself against the wall and turned myself backward to examine the mysterious monitor. The moonlight streamed into each window and every corner of the room was conspicuous, and yet I beheld nothing! If a human being had been there could he fail to have been visible?”

Brown's pages are not all filled with such passages as these, but they occur often enough to keep the reader awake with their crawling shivers. It is the riot of the improbable and the impossible in action, based upon a pestilence or the red Indian. The last was an element which our early and later writers found too useful to leave out of the new American fiction. But in his yellow literature Brown had a good purpose to accomplish in enforcing lessons of justice and humanity, and in attempting incidentally to have something done to head off the ravages of the plague. He was a voice crying in the wilderness of New York and Philadelphia for sanitary reform. He would not find himself out of date in this respect if he were still living. Adopting the present style of fiction he might still do good service. As it was, he hit the taste of his own time, not over nice, and the temper of an age of restless and daring speculation, with

its new-fledged theories in medicine, philosophy, and social science. His ghastly and ghoulish treatment of his theme was not altogether inappropriate to its horrors, nor out of harmony with the demands of readers who were familiar with them. After all, these weird productions were an advance upon the plaintive and melancholic wail that was started by Susanna Rowson. They were at least a howling wilderness of misery, with an incidental inculcation of constancy in friendship and fortitude in suffering. These and other virtues were bravely held up for admiration and imitation with shrieks and fainting, floods of tears and tearing rant, and the crippling paralysis of nightmare. Possibly his generation needed this heroic treatment. At any rate, they took his medicine greedily, and called him the first great American novelist — after England had approved.

He wrote political papers also of considerable value, advocating the Louisiana purchase and the territorial extension of the United States, and an address to Congress upon foreign trade, exhibiting in these the practical side of his nature. In addition, his contributions to the periodical press were numerous. He was an incessant and rapid writer, with premonitions that his life work must be done early. He died at the age of thirty-nine.

His novels, recently republished, may be regarded as the climax of American fiction in the eighteenth century in its late movement. They stand on the dividing line between two centuries, gathering up the romanticism of one into a burning focus, and foreshowing the realism of the next in a baleful glare shed over uncommon experiences.

There is little else to mark the passing of the second

century of literary performance in America. In some directions there was much to be attained, but at the same time much had been accomplished in the eighteen decades since Bradford began his diary. If a sentence from three representative writers be taken to indicate the prevailing spirit and manner of their time, the landmarks of a forward movement will be evident. For the Puritan age let Parson Ward of Ipswich speak in his "Simple Cobbler of Agawam," who was simple neither in wit nor style.

The Forward
Movement.

"We have been reputed a Colluvies of wild Opinionists, swarmed into a remote wilderness to find elbow-room for our Phanatic Doctrines and practises; I trust our diligence past, and constant sedulity against such persons and courses will plead better things for us. I dare to take upon me, to be the Herauld of New England so far, as to proclaim to the World, in the name of our Colony, that all Familists, Antinomians, Anabaptists, and other Enthusiasts shall have free liberty to keep away from us, and such as will come to be gone as fast as they can, the sooner the better." Which recalls Governor Dudley's ominous couplet:

"Let men of God in churches watch
O'er such as do a Toleration hatch."

Cotton Mather's eulogy on Rev. Ralph Partridge exhibits the fashion in 1700: "This Partridge had the innocency of a dove and the loftiness of an eagle. Nevertheless he was so afraid of being anything which looked like a bird wandering from his nest that he remained with his people till he took wing to become a bird of paradise."

A hundred years later Jefferson could write in his first

inaugural, 1801: "During the contest of opinion through which we have passed the animation of discussions and of exertions has sometimes worn an aspect which might impose on strangers unused to think freely and to speak and write what they think, but this being now decided by the voice of the nation, announced according to the rules of the Constitution, all will, of course, arrange themselves under the will of the law and unite in common efforts for the common good."

Comparison of these representative sentiments shows that as great an advance had been made in their spirit as in the form of their expression. The new nation was beginning to create a new literature.

XVI

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THERE was as little in American literature as in nature to signalize the opening of the nineteenth century. The sun rose and set as usual and men went about their business without further disturbance than the occasional lapse into the habit, one hundred years old, of writing 17— in dating their letters. Some tried to imagine that a great event had happened when they crossed the century line, as in crossing the equator. Others said that it was only an arbitrary division of the years, at best measuring ten times ten of them.

If some name to place upon the century milestone were sought for, none more significant could have been found than that of John Quincy Adams. He was at least a notable representative of the thinkers ^{John Quincy Adams.} and writers then abounding. Political strife was running high and strong. Letters themselves were full of politics, schemes, and partisanship. Yet the outlook of the nation was growing broader and more cosmopolitan. With all this the son of the second president was in sympathy. His training for it had begun as a boy of eleven, when he accompanied his father, who had been sent on a diplomatic trip to France. His schooling followed in European courts and cities among ambassadors and statesmen. As a consequence he received a singular preparation for college, but one which placed him in the junior class when he en-

tered Harvard. After graduation came the study of law, and then the customary waiting for clients. It was at this period that his literary proclivities began to appear and, of course, in polemics, as became the heir of a Puritan line. Thomas Paine's "Rights of Man" inspired young Adams to write an anonymous refutation, which was by some attributed to his father. The question of neutrality next enlisted his ready pen, with other topics which were then of absorbing interest. These started him in a diplomatic career in Holland, Prussia, Russia, and England.

The first year of the new century was that of the publication of his "Tour through Silesia," one of his incidental journeys during the residence in Europe. It was typical of the American abroad, and the forerunner of numerous books of travel when more Americans began to go into all lands and to publish their impressions, grave and otherwise. It was also indicative of the wider view of men and affairs which provincialism was bound to take when rubbing elbows with the nations, and an antidote to separatism, isolation, and undue conceit. In form this record of travel into an out-of-the-way region was a series of letters to the writer's brother in Philadelphia, written with the freedom and unreserve of family correspondence. But an enterprising editor of the "Portfolio" saw that they would prove interesting reading, and printed them with the consent of the recipient, who was doubtless proud to honor their author without his consent or knowledge. The occurrence is a comment on the freedom of literary manners at the time, particularly as these letters were carried to London and reprinted in a volume three years later, where the author first saw them in print. Afterward they were published in German and French translations,

revealing sundry references to persons and conversations that were intended for the eye of a single individual in America. The art of discreet editing appears to have been as lacking as the desire to benefit the public was ardent. When Mr. Adams was at home in Quincy in 1804 he made this entry in his diary for the 20th of September: "This afternoon I read over in the "Portfolio" most of my letters on Silesia, which, by an advertisement in the newspapers, appear to have been republished in London in a volume. I find part of one letter from Leipzig, relating to Lord Holland and Mr. Elliot, which I always much regretted to see published, and which I shall regret still more if it is included in the republication. In writing the Silesian letters I had no expectation that any of them would be published."

The incident and the volume broach a subject that is of more consequence than either in the history of American literature, namely, the art of correspondence and its place among other kinds of composition. It may not be more just to say that it is a lost art than to add that cheap postage and frequent mails have destroyed the necessity for long letters. But there are other qualities which have vanished from epistolary writing that once gave it a right to be reckoned among the lighter forms of belles-lettres. This French term was applicable to them literally.

The age of the Adamses was the golden age of such productions, and the family itself was as distinguished in this minor department of letters as in others. The correspondence of John Adams and his accomplished wife is an example of what may be attained in this informal method of communication and interchange of ideas. In these days the old style may not seem alto-

Correspon-
dence.

gether informal. Neither would the manners of the time. Besides, it is possible that in the necessity of writing long letters and at long intervals the writers were not unmindful of what had hitherto been done in this direction. It was a time when the letters of Cicero and Pliny might have been read in the original by a large proportion of educated people. The correspondence of Abelard and Héloïse could not have been unknown to Americans in France, and the letters of Walpole and Chesterfield to such as were in England. Pope's epistles and Gray's and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's could not have been unheard-of if unread by cultivated Americans who were distinguishing themselves in this way, as Franklin and Jefferson and the Adamses. For two centuries letter-writing had been something more than a matter of business or news-telling. It was an accomplishment, into the acquisition of which went painstaking and out of which came some of the best and most instructive writing in France, England, and America. Nothing so illumines the obscure corners of national life and personal character and brings back the daily going out and coming in of a community. What the Paston letters were to the reign of Henry VI. and Lady Russell's to that of Charles II. and Mme. De Sévigné's to that of Louis XIV., the correspondence of American statesmen was to the stormy times in the last half of the eighteenth century and in the first quarter of the nineteenth. Their service to history may be greater than to literature, but in this respect they cannot be overlooked. They compare favorably with other productions of the period and more than favorably with the performances of our own day in the same direction.

- John Quincy Adams's recognition as a man of letters

rested on proficiency in no single department. Harvard College admitted this in appointing him to the chair of rhetoric and belles-lettres in 1806, where for three years he delivered lectures which were afterward printed and for a time had great repute. This was in the line of the oratorical composition which served him in his career as a statesman in the legislative assemblies to which he was chosen at a later day and as a framer of state papers. His collected works, apart from his diary and correspondence, are those of a publicist rather than of a man who has made literature the pursuit of a lifetime. In this he may be here contrasted with two of his contemporaries.

On the 24th of January, 1807, the first number of a paper called "Salmagundi" appeared in the shop of D. Longworth, publisher, in the city of New York.

The first of the four articles which it contained announced that the intention of the editors was

Light Literature — "Salmagundi."

"to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town and castigate the age: this is an arduous task, and therefore we undertake it with confidence. Like all true and able editors we consider ourselves infallible, and therefore with the customary diffidence of our brethren of the quill, we shall take the liberty of interfering in all matters either of a public or private nature." The town was fairly warned what to expect and they were not disappointed in their expectations. Launcelot Langstaff, William Wizard, and Anthony Evergreen were equal to every occasion. Manners, fashions, the theatre, social assemblies, concerts, travellers, young men and maidens, train-bands, politics, and the weather came in for a share of running comment and criticism. Even well-known citizens imagined, with more or less reason, that they were sometimes held up

before the public in names painfully transparent. A large portion of the next issue would then be devoted to denials and assurances as bad as the original exhibition. The dinners of the Gible family, the virtues of Miss Wearwell and the eccentricities of Miss Dashaway, the singing of Demi Semiquaver, the federalism of Uncle John, the resources of the Cockloft family, the career of Straddle, the diversions of Gotham, its foibles or its follies, are all prolific themes for the occupant of the "elbow chair," prototype of the "easy chair" of a worthy successor.

"Lolling in my elbow chair this fine summer morn, I feel myself insensibly yielding to that feeling of indolence the season is so well fitted to inspire. Surely never was a town more subject to midsummer fancies or dog-day whim-whams than this most excellent of cities. No sooner does a new disorder or a new freak seize one individual but it is sure to run through the whole community. Last summer it was the poplar worm. This summer everybody has had full employment in planning fortifications for our harbor. Politics is a kind of mental food soon digested ; it is thrown up again the moment it is swallowed. Let but one of these quidnuncs take in an idea through eye or ear, and it immediately issues out at his mouth — he begins to talk. He is like one charged with electricity ; present but a knuckle and he begins to talk. To rise in this country a man must first descend. The aspiring politician may be compared to that indefatigable insect called the tumbler, which buries itself in filth and works in the dirt until it forms a little ball, which it rolls laboriously along, sometimes head, sometimes tail foremost."

It is when the fashionable nonsense of the town comes under the point of Langstaff's pen that most amusement is afforded, and also the information that society a century ago was not unlike itself to-day.

At the Beginning of the 19th Century 181

"It is highly amusing to observe the gradation of a family aspiring to style. While beating up against wind and tide they keep bowing and bowing, as McSycophant says, and absolutely overwhelm you with their friendship and loving kindness. But having once gained the envied prominence, never were beings in the world more changed, assuming the most intolerable caprices, etc."

No reader of Addison's "Spectator," then one hundred years old, could fail to see that these papers were after the manner of that delectable classic. It was a day when the question of imitation was not so vital as that of fidelity in the copy. Independence of Great Britain politically had not been successfully followed by attempts at literary independence. Some clamored for this, but their struggles for it did not meet their aspirations. The material to work upon was here in abundance in a new country, but methods and style are matters of growth and inheritance rather than of discovery. Consequently the authors of this early venture in the field of light literature showed their good sense in following the best model that could be found in the line of their undertaking. Considering, too, that they were young men and young Americans, they displayed more wisdom than if they had yielded to the demand for a purely national literature which was already beginning to be made. As it was, there was sufficient originality in design and execution to free the enterprise from the charge of being a servile copy. It was simply the similarity of subject and manner of treatment, to which must be added in the case of the principal writer a nature not unlike Addison's.

This writer, as everybody knows, was Washington Irving, and associated with him as the other chief con-

tributor was James K. Paulding, a cousin of Major André's captor. It will be following the order of development

Paulding. to speak of Paulding first, for he represents the American idea of literary independence

— when he is writing by himself after the "Salmagundi" partnership with Irving. Experiences during the revolutionary war had made him a hater of everything English, and when the war of 1812 was declared he published "The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan," in which, however, the style is more British than American in his following of Swift — an Irishman in his eyes. His pamphlet on "The United States and England" and "A Sketch of Old England" and "John Bull in America," with parodies on Scott's poems and novels, betray the same anglophobia. He was better in his "Dutchman's Fireside," a story of the old French war, which passed through six editions in a year, and was republished in England, France, and Holland. Interspersed with the titles already mentioned were novels, poems, and sketches, stories, comedies, more "Salmagundi," a life of Washington for youth, and even a defence of slavery, all of which required a literary life of nearly half a century to produce. Yet this was a remarkable achievement for a man who had only fifteen dollars' worth of schooling. He had his admirers in his own generation among those who were more discriminating in political matters than in literary, and with whom Americanism counted for more than cosmopolitanism. He represented a tendency to break with colonial bondage to the British manner because it was British, and in so far was a pioneer in a movement that was sure to be started when the opportune time should arrive. The

difficulty was that the time had not yet come when the American author could turn his back upon his English predecessors and contemporaries and be sure of a literary renown that would last for three generations. Irving saw this, but Paulding did not. This is not the only reason why the one is read and re-read and the other almost forgotten, but it accounts in part for the different future which was awaiting the two youthful partners in "Salmagundi." The book itself, however, will have a perennial interest as long as cities are inhabited and human nature remains unchanged.

The half hopeful, half fearful view which youthful Americans took of their country's political future is illustrated by Paulding's words on the American People:

"If the people of the United States cannot sustain a free government, or if they suffer themselves to be enslaved by force or fraud, then may the human race read their doom; for never was there, and never can there be, a people placed under circumstances more favorable to its preservation. The moment they cease to be free they will merit the scorn and contempt of the world.

"When the love of pelf becomes the ruling passion, and the golden calf the only divinity; when money is made the standard by which men are estimated, and held as the sole agent in the attainment of that happiness which is the common pursuit of all mankind: then will this majestic fabric of freedom crumble to pieces, and from its ruins will arise a hideous monster with Liberty in his mouth, and Despotism in his heart."

The independent spirit which Paulding advocated is shown in a note of his which an editor quotes in an edition of "The Dutchman's Fireside":

"It has always been one of my first objects to incite and encourage the genius of this country, and, most especially to

draw its attention toward our own history, traditions, scenery, and manners, instead of foraging in the barren and exhausted fields of the Old World. I have lived to see this object in a great measure accomplished, and one of the most gratifying of all my reflections is, that possibly I have had some little agency in bringing it about."

With equal satisfaction the editor adds:

"Yes, there was now a germ of an American literature; distinct; on its own root; growing; vigorous; not to be pooh-poohed, or trampled under foot, or easily done to death any more."

And then follows a burst of prophecy which has been partially fulfilled:

"Assuredly the time will arrive when the Americans as a people will take pride in a literature of their own and realize that a National Literature is a National Power."

In the same book Paulding exemplifies his theory of using the domestic material of forest and river, wild beast and Indian in a way that anticipates Cooper. He also anticipates by almost a century the policy toward the Indian which at last is likely to prevail over all others. He makes Sir William Johnson say:

"I sometimes despair of being able to consummate the plan which has gradually opened itself to my mind during my residence here, and which is now become the leading object of my life, — to bring the Indians into the circle of civilized life. I cannot but see that if they remain as they are they must perish. Nothing can save them but conforming to the laws, and customs, and occupations of the whites. I have endeavoured to prepare them for this, and for that purpose have tried to gain their confidence and establish an influence over them."

XVII

WASHINGTON IRVING, HUMORIST AND HISTORIAN

IN the year which saw the United States admitted into the commonwealth of nations a child was born in New York city who should eventually be considered worthy to sit among the makers of literature Antecedents. in England. This honor had not been accorded to any of his predecessors, however interesting theological, political, or scientific emanations from America had been to foreigners devoted to such discussions. Something broader than these specialties was asked and something finer than the form of treatment thus far prevailing. The harmonious compound of vision and reflection, the sight of the eye and the creative imagination, stirring the heart and delighting the sense of fitness, and so appealing to race sympathies as to secure permanent appreciation — this combination, or a similar one, which creates literature had not been completely effected by any experimenter here previous to Washington Irving. Nor can it be said that he was the final lucky accident succeeding many approaches. New York had not been preëminently a literary centre. The Irving family, though with a proclivity for letters, were not descendants of a long line of cultivated ancestors, as was often the case with some New England authors. Young Washington himself was through his school days at sixteen, and, though a bookish boy, was also a stroller over Manhattan Island with a

keen eye for what was going on, and a wistful gaze after the sails that filled away for lands remote. In fine, the missing link in the evolution theory here is so long that it is easier and safer to say that he occurred, as Goldsmith and Addison occurred; they with the advantages of the university, he with the cultivation which travel brings and citizenship of the wide world. Providence bestowed upon him large endowments, of which he made the most and the best.

His first venture by himself, after the "Salmagundi" experiment with his brother William and Paulding, must have added to the encouragement which that "Knickerbocker's History of New York." had already given him. "The History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty," with its account of the unutterable ponderings of Walter the Doubter, the disastrous projects of William the Testy, and the chivalric achievements of Peter the Headstrong, came very near being what the author asserted, "the only authentic history of the times that ever hath been or ever will be written." If history is a reproduction of life, as well as a record of events, no better representation of a former age to illustrate and ridicule the on-goings of a later one is likely to be made by any successor of Diedrich Knickerbocker. For example:

"Such was the happy reign of Wouter Van Twiller, celebrated in many a long-forgotten song as the real golden age, the rest being nothing but counterfeit, copper-washed coin. In that delightful period a sweet and holy calm reigned over the whole province. The burgomaster smoked his pipe in peace; the substantial solace of his domestic cares, after her daily toils were done, sat soberly at the door, with her arms crossed over her

apron of snowy white without being insulted by ribald street-walkers or vagabond boys — those unlucky urchins who do so infest our streets, displaying under the roses of youth the thorns and briers of iniquity. Then it was that the lover with ten breeches and the damsel with petticoats half a score indulged in in all the endearments of virtuous love without fear and without reproach. Happy would it have been for New Amsterdam could it always have existed in this state of blissful ignorance and lovely simplicity, but alas! the days of childhood are too sweet to last."

As for the writer's own, he prolonged them to the latest extremity. As a companion of jolly fellows, as a desirable young man in society, and as a traveller in America and Europe he always seemed younger than he was. He was in no haste to begin life nor ambitious to enter upon a career — especially at the bar, to which he was admitted by the utmost charity of construction as to his knowledge of the law. This, however, was the most dignified of his delays before getting down to the business of his life of letters, with which clients did not greatly interfere. Like his own worthies of Pavonia, "drifting quietly on until they were roused by an uncommon tossing and agitation of their vessels" in Hell Gate, he allowed himself to drift with the stream until the failure of the business in which he had a share threw him upon his oars. Then it was that he turned his back upon the frolic of "Salmagundi" and the caricaturing of New Amsterdam arising out of mud in a vapor of tobacco smoke and peopled with the "fat, somniferous, and respectable families that flourished and slumbered in the early days of Walter the Doubter," or were disturbed by the untimely reforms of Peter the Testy. All this was rough and ready 'prentice work to what was to follow under the pressure of that kind of

necessity which has settled frisky genius into the harness before and since his days. Moreover, some account must be taken of the crushing sorrow which came into his happy life in the death of the woman who was its chief joy and would have been his wife, whose memory was a hallowed presence to the end of his days. In after years when he had girded himself for his vocation the bright spirit was unquenched, but it shone in a man who had been chastened by adversity and uplifted and enlarged by grief. To his natural humor was added a tender pathos, which made his next book full of the human element that attracts and holds all readers with irresistible charm.

"The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent," is what its title implies, a collection of short, suggestive outlines of narration and incident, struck off with the fidelity to nature and certainty of touch which belong to an accomplished artist. A few masterly strokes reveal much more than themselves, and intimate possibilities far beyond the limited range which the author allowed himself. For example, everybody knows how "Rip Van Winkle" has been illustrated by the dramatization to which Joseph Jefferson has given a masterly interpretation. And yet it is a dull imagination which has not seen without assistance the vagabond Rip, his dog and gun and termagant spouse, and what was left of these after the twenty years' nap, as clearly portrayed in the suggestive lines of Irving.

"He looked round for his gun, but in place of the clean, well-oiled fowling piece he found an old fire-lock lying by him, the barrel incrustured with rust, the lock falling off and the stock worm-eaten. He shook his head, shouldered the rusty gun and turned his steps homeward. He had now entered the skirts of

the village. A troop of strange children ran at his heels, hooting after him and pointing at his gray beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognized for an old acquaintance, barked at him as he passed. Strange names were over the doors — strange faces at the windows — everything was strange.”

This is a portrayal to whose realism little can be added by brush or the living picture. It may be superbly represented, but it was all there before for the ordinary reader, set in simple words, but always the right ones in the right place.

“It was with some difficulty that he found the way to his own house, which he approached with silent awe, expecting every moment to hear the shrill voice of Dame Van Winkle. He found the house gone to decay — the roof fallen in, the windows shattered and the doors off the hinges. A half-starved dog that looked like Wolf was skulking about it. Rip called him by name, but the cur snarled, showed his teeth, and passed on. ‘My very dog,’ sighed poor Rip, ‘has forgotten me!’”

This seems simple and easy to do. The reader thinks that it is the very way he himself should have described the old fellow if he had seen him. To test the matter, let the habit of Franklin be imitated. Read the story once more and rewrite it; then compare versions. Previous to the author’s, however, was the greater achievement of inventing, or if it was an adaptation of a German legend, of adapting the character to the drowsy atmosphere of the Catskills.

The genius which produced the “Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” and thirty other sketches, was instantly recognized in England. Walter Scott’s quick appreciation and generous assistance brought the new author into pleasant and profitable relations with the chief publishers of London,

and after Scott, Byron, and Murray led, there was nothing that did not follow. An American had found his place in the fraternity of letters; and without bating a jot of his patriotism or sparing the truth in speaking of English prejudices, established himself for five years in the literary metropolis where he could best do his work and find a market for it. It was also greeted at home with the enthusiasm that could rest confidently on English approval, while fed by local pride in a national representative of American letters abroad.

Irving, however, was becoming a cosmopolite. England did not keep him too long. By 1820 he was in Paris hobnobbing with Thomas Moore, following up the theatres, catching notes of applause from across the Channel, then going back to win an English triumph on English soil in his "Bracebridge Hall." No native could have pictured the life of a country squire more to the satisfaction of all England. There was much in it with which the author himself had sympathy, as well as with the people he describes. As if in half apology to Americans he says: "I can never forget that this is my fatherland. And yet the circumstances under which I have viewed it have been by no means such as were calculated to produce favorable impressions." He then remarks that close observation will often change opinions hastily formed of a national character which shows its rough side first. Special mention is made of the reception accorded to the essay in the "Sketch Book" on literary feuds between England and America, and the "generous sympathy in every English bosom toward a solitary individual lifting up his voice in a strange land to vindicate the character of his nation."

Life and Letters Abroad.

This, indeed, is the eminence which Irving occupies, higher than that of being our first man of letters in the order of time. He was a peacemaker in an age of misunderstanding, jealousy, and hostility. ^{His Good Offices.} The ill-feeling consequent upon two wars had not wholly subsided. In letters there was independent aspiration on one side, complacent superciliousness and sharp censoriousness on the other. In this very year Sydney Smith contemptuously asked: "Who ever reads an American book?" The one man who was able to reply to the taunt could do it in his "English Writers on America." A few sentences will show the large and generous spirit in which this was done. After observing that impressions of this country had been gained from the worst kind of travellers, he remarks that the prosperity founded upon political liberty and the general diffusion of knowledge cannot be overlooked: that it is of more consequence to England than to us that justice be done and resentment allayed; that "possessing the fountain head whence the literature of the language flows, it is in her power to make it the medium of amiable and magnanimous feeling — a stream where the two nations might meet together and drink in peace and kindness." And to Americans he says: "Let it be the pride of our writers, discarding all feelings of irritation and disdaining to retaliate the illiberality of British authors, to speak of the English nation without prejudice and with determined candor. While they rebuke the indiscriminating bigotry with which some of our countrymen admire and imitate everything English because it is English, let them frankly point out what is really worthy of approbation." The entire essay shows Irving in the character of a broad-minded, fearless days-

man between the two countries in a sphere more important than diplomacy. "The mere contests of the sword," he says, "are temporary, but the slanders of the pen pierce to the heart; they rankle longest in the noblest spirit; they dwell ever present in the mind. Trace hostilities to their cause and they will be found to originate in the mischievous effusions of mercenary writers who concoct and circulate the venom that is to inflame the generous and the brave."

How much this author did toward bringing about an "era of good feeling" is seen in the contemporary testimony of the day. The two nations might still be at loggerheads on many subjects, but they both agreed in their reverence for the man who dared to show them their obligations and privileges. It was the beginning of a better understanding by each people of the good qualities of the other which has increased with every decade. And nothing has so hastened the growth of kindly sentiment or temporarily retarded it as the attitude of responsible writers in either country.

Of Irving's later and more pretentious labors a corresponding amount might be said. They were the result of a wish that came with advancing years to do more monumental work. After the "Tales of a Traveller" had been thrown off, as in his opinion the climax of his lighter diversions — for writing was no task when the mood seized him — he then entered upon the most prolific period of his career at the age of forty-six. The year 1826 found him at Madrid to begin his "Life of Columbus." This occupied two pleasant years, and was succeeded by the "Companions," and this by the "Conquest of Granada" and "The Alhambra" before 1832,

**Voluminous
Writings.**

when he returned to America after a seventeen years' residence in Europe. These larger achievements brought him academic honors from Oxford and the medal of the Royal Society of Literature, with no end of applause abroad and at home. Then, after ten years of light writing about this and that, tours, recollections, legends, and biographies, came the crowning honor of his life in the mission to Spain, to be signalized by his principal work, the "Life of Washington." With the last volume of this he may be said to have ended his days at the "Sunnyside" retreat on the banks of the river he loved, whose borders he had peopled with legendary beings recalled from the shadowy and dreamy years of the old Dutch dynasty.

With respect to the two points of view from which every writer is estimated — namely, his own period and ours — it may be said of Irving that he wears well. Against the background of the time in which he lived it is not strange that he was regarded as a marvel. His early work was done in an age of literary barrenness, itself the natural sequence of disturbed conditions in the state of the country, which the war of 1812 helped to settle. In such a time such a writer could not be otherwise than preëminent. In his department there was no second in this country, nor anything better abroad. If he is compared with writers of the present time in the class of work which he did best, are any better to be found? The short story has been marvellously developed in recent years, but Irving anticipated some of its best effects eighty years ago, and if not its sole pioneer was its most skilful narrator by far. As an historian and a biographer he has been surpassed in the particulars which make such writers philosophically eminent, but in the

Success and
Position.

domain of the creative imagination, dealing with twilight forms and investing the commonplace with the haze of romance he has no peer. If, again, the continuous sale of works is an evidence of his permanent value, it may be said that few authors have had such a record for fourscore years, either in compensation for copyright or in the disposal of edition after edition. For the single work the "Life of Columbus" he received \$15,750, and the copies of almost any of his writings from first to last may be numbered by the hundreds of thousands. Such success is phenomenal in a cultivated nation. It was preëminently exceptional in a raw country, in a time of literary famine and with peculiar obstacles to foreign recognition. Over these hindrances Irving triumphed by the literary faculty which he possessed and improved, and by the winning graces of his manner and the genuine kindness of his heart and the high moral tone of his writings. Two nations, which he did more than any man of his time to unite, will always do him reverence.

As an example of his humor this portrait of John Bull — a favorite subject at the time — caused a smile on both sides of the Atlantic :

"There is no species of humor in which the English more excel, than that which consists in caricaturing and giving ludicrous appellations, or nicknames: In this way they have designated, not merely individuals, but nations; and in their fondness for pushing a joke they have not spared even themselves in the figure of a sturdy, corpulent old fellow, with a three-cornered hat, red waistcoat, leather breeches, and stout oaken cudgel. . . .

"To all appearance he is a plain, downright matter-of-fact fellow, with much less of poetry than rich prose. He excels in humor more than in wit; is jolly rather than gay; melancholy rather than morose; can easily be moved to a sudden

tear, or surprised into a broad laugh ; but he loathes sentiment, and has no turn for light pleasantry. . . .

“He is continually volunteering his services to settle his neighbors’ affairs, and takes it in great dudgeon if they engage in any matter of consequence without asking his advice ; though he seldom engages in any friendly office of the kind without finishing by getting into a squabble with all parties, and then railing bitterly at their ingratitude. He cannot hear of a quarrel between the most distant of his neighbors, but he begins incontinently to fumble with the head of his cudgel, and consider whether his interest or honor does not require that he should meddle in the broil. Indeed he has extended his relations of pride and policy so completely over the whole country, that no event can take place without infringing some of his finely-spun rights and dignities. Couched in his little domain with these filaments stretching forth in every direction, he is like some choleric, bottle-bellied old spider, who has woven his web over a whole chamber, so that a fly cannot buzz nor a breeze blow without startling his repose, and causing him to sally forth wrathfully from his den.

“It is one of his peculiarities, however, that he only relishes the beginning of an affray ; he always goes into a fight with alacrity, but comes out of it grumbling even when victorious ; and though no one fights with more obstinacy to carry a contested point, yet, when the battle is over, and he comes to a reconciliation, he is so much taken up with the mere shaking of hands, that he is apt to let his antagonist pocket all that they have been quarrelling about. It is not, therefore, fighting that he ought so much to be on his guard against, as making friends.

“He is a little fond of playing the magnifico abroad ; of pulling out a long purse ; flinging his money bravely about ; but immediately after one of these fits of extravagance, he will be taken with violent qualms of economy, and in such moods will not pay the smallest tradesman’s bill without violent altercation, drawing his coin out of his breeches’ pocket with infinite reluctance ; paying to the uttermost farthing, but accompanying every guinea with a growl.

“With all his talk of economy, however, he is a bountiful

provider, and a hospitable housekeeper. Everything that lives on him seems to thrive and grow fat. Groups of veteran beef-eaters, gouty pensioners, and retired heroes of buttery and larder loll about his walls, doze under his trees, and sun themselves upon his benches. . . .

"His very faults smack of the raciness of his good qualities. His extravagance savors of generosity; his quarrelsomeness of his courage; his credulity of his faith; his vanity of his pride; his bluntness of his sincerity."

Some of Irving's qualities as an historian or as a biographer — since he was better in the latter capacity — are indicated by his observations on the character of Columbus.

"Columbus was a man of great and inventive genius. The operations of his mind were energetic but irregular, bursting forth at times with that irresistible force which characterizes intellects of such an order. His ambition was lofty and noble, inspiring him with high thoughts, and an anxiety to distinguish himself by great achievements. He aimed at dignity and wealth in the same elevated spirit with which he sought renown; they were to rise from the territories he should discover, and be commensurate in importance. The vast gains that he anticipated from his discoveries he intended to appropriate to princely purposes; to institutions for the relief of the poor of his native city, to the foundation of churches, and above all, to crusades for the recovery of the holy sepulchre.

"The magnanimity of his nature shone forth through all the troubles of his stormy career. Though continually outraged in his dignity, braved in his authority, foiled in his plans, and endangered in his person by the seditions of turbulent and worthless men, yet he restrained his valiant and indignant spirit, and brought himself to forbear and reason, and even to supplicate. Nor should we fail to notice how free he was from all feeling of revenge, how ready to forgive and forget on the least signs of repentance and atonement. He has been extolled for his skill in controlling others, but far greater praise is due him for the firmness he displayed in governing himself.

"His piety was genuine and fervent; religion mingled with the whole course of his thoughts and actions, and shone forth in his most private and unstudied writings. Whenever he made any great discovery, he devoutly returned thanks to God. He observed the festivals of the Church in the wildest situations. The sabbath was to him a day of sacred rest, on which he would never sail from port unless in case of extreme necessity. The religion, thus deeply seated in his soul, diffused a sober dignity, and a benign composure over his whole deportment; his very language was pure and guarded, and free from all gross or irreverent expressions. . . .

"A peculiar trait in his rich and varied character remains to be noticed; namely, that ardent and enthusiastic imagination which threw a magnificence over his whole course of thought. A poetic temperament is discernible throughout all his writings and in all his actions. It spread a golden and glorious world around him, and tinged everything with its own gorgeous colors. It exalted his own office in his eyes and made him conceive himself an agent sent forth upon a sublime and awful mission, and subject to mysterious intimations from the Deity; such as the voice which he imagined spoke to him in comfort amidst the troubles of Hispaniola, and in the silence of night on the disastrous coast of Veragua.

"With all the visionary fervor of his imagination, its fondest dreams fell short of the reality. He died in ignorance of the real grandeur of his discovery! Until his last breath, he entertained the idea that he had merely opened a new way to the old resorts of opulent commerce, and had discovered some of the wild regions of the East. What visions of glory would have broken upon his mind could he have known that he had indeed discovered a new continent equal to the old world in magnitude, and separated by two vast oceans from all the earth hitherto known by civilized man! and how would his magnanimous spirit have been consoled, could he have anticipated the splendid empires which would arise in the beautiful world he had discovered! and the nations and tongues and languages which were to fill its lands with his renown, and to revere and bless his name to the latest posterity!"

XVIII

THE KNICKERBOCKER GROUP

No writer of Irving's genius could spring up in a barren age without inspiring such mediocre talent as might be inclined to lethargy. The mere stirring of fallow ground will send up unsuspected growths, and the awakening which the keen humorist gave the drowsy men of Manhattan started a crop of letters, among other effects of the shock. If the name of the Knickerbocker School be too large for the little group of authors who followed afar Diedrich the historian, it may be said that the term was applied to less dignified objects in the day of its immense popularity and to more worthy ones since.

The "New York Evening Post" had been established in the first year of the century with a hospitable policy toward letters, as well as a critical spirit which enhanced the honor of appearing in its columns. To gain admittance to them was next to having a book published. On the street and in coffee-houses were knots of young men with corresponding ambitions, notwithstanding the commercial bias of the city and the material bent of the age. Foremost among them was a banker's clerk, who was not so far lost in arithmetical figures that he could not appreciate poetical, and even wished that he might "lounge upon a rainbow and read Tom Campbell," a sentiment with which a bystander agreed. In this way Fitz-Greene

Halleck and Joseph Rodman Drake became acquainted in the spring of 1819 ; the beginning of a literary companionship as intimate as it was brief, for Drake died the next year.

Judged by what he had begun to do, this young poet was cut down at the opening of a promising career. His early essays in verse found their subjects for satire in the topics of the town, but descriptive Drake. and patriotic pieces soon followed, the address to the American flag deserving a higher place than all that have succeeded it. A more remarkable feat was the production in two or three days of "The Culprit Fay," in refutation of an assertion that it would be difficult to write a fairy poem, purely imaginative, without the aid of human characters. He accomplished this work with no nearer approach to humanity than in these two lines:

"For an Ouphe has broken his vestal vow ;
He has loved an earthly maid."

The rest is the fanciful account of the consequences of such a high misdemeanor, full of delicate art and the tracteries of an imagination at home with the hidden things of nature, itself idealized and peopled with intelligences of the poet's own creating. It is the midsummer night's dream of an airy fancy set to this measure :

"He put his acorn helmet on ;
It was plumed of the silk of the thistle down ;
The corselet plate that guarded his breast
Was once the wild bee's golden vest ;
His cloak of a thousand mingled dyes
Was formed of the wings of butterflies ;
His shield was the shell of a ladybug queen,
Studs of gold on a ground of green ;
And the quivering lance which he brandished bright
Was the sting of a wasp he had slain in fight.

Swift he bestrode his firefly steed ;
 He bared his blade of the bent grass blue ;
 He drove his spurs of the cockle-seed,
 And away like a glance of thought he flew
 To skim the heavens and follow far
 The fiery trail of the rocket star.

“Up to the vaulted firmament
 His path the firefly courser bent,
 And at every gallop on the wind,
 He flung a glittering spark behind ;
 He flies like a feather in the blast
 Till the first light cloud in heaven is past.
 But the shapes of air have begun their work,
 And a drizzly mist is round him cast :
 He cannot see through the mantle murk,
 He shivers with cold, but he urges fast ;
 Through storm and darkness, sleet and shade,
 He lashes his steed and spurs amain,
 For shadowy hands have twitched the rein,
 And flame-shot tongues around him played,
 And near him many a fiendish eye
 Glared with a fell malignity,
 And yells of rage, and shrieks of fear,
 Came screaming on his startled ear.”

The entire poem should be the delight of children who dwell on the borderland of the seen and the unseen. Had the author lived, the prose fancies of Irving might have had their counterpart in the verse of Drake, inspired by the same enchanted ground of the American Rhineland.

Halleck survived to write an elegy upon his friend, which shows how far the art had progressed since the days of Mather; also to continue the strain of American verse which the two friends had joined in contributing to the columns of the “Evening Post,” in “The Croakers,” a sort of rhymed “Salmagundi,” whose present value is chiefly to throw light upon the

society and politics of old New York. By and by he was stirred by the wrongs of suffering Greece to lift up the voice of freedom in "Marco Bozzaris," the genuine worth of which has been somewhat cheapened by countless repetitions in numberless schoolrooms. Yet it might otherwise have been known to fewer of the author's countrymen, especially in a later day, when American poets began to abound. In his day as good ones as he was were not abundant, and if he was overrated then there is danger that his real excellence will be forgotten now. Still, his best work was done early, and some of it will always find a place in collections of such American poetry as is worth keeping before the people for historic or artistic reasons. Whoever has lost a friend of his youth will associate with the recollection of his sorrow the lament of Halleck for his companion, beginning:

"Green be the turf above thee,
Friend of my better days!
None knew thee but to love thee,
Nor named thee but to praise."

His "Alnwick Castle" is a memory of old England with the kindly reversion of a race never wholly alienated from the old home:

"Home of the Percy's high-born race,
Home of their beautiful and brave,
Alike their birth and burial place,
Their cradle and their grave!
Still sternly o'er the castle gate
Their house's Lion stands in state,
As in his proud departed hours;
And warriors frown in stone on high
And feudal banners 'flout the sky'
Above his princely towers.

"A gentle hill its side inclines,
 Lovely in England's fadeless green,
 To meet the quiet stream which winds
 Through this romantic scene
 As silently and sweetly still,
 As when at evening, on that hill,
 While summer's wind blew soft and low,
 Seated by gallant Hotspur's side
 His Katherine was a happy bride,
 A thousand years ago.

"Wise with the lore of centuries,
 What tales, if there be 'tongues in trees,'
 Those giant oaks could tell,
 Of beings born and buried there ;
 Tales of the peasant and the peer,
 Tales of the bridal and the bier,
 The welcome and farewell,
 Since on their boughs the startled bird
 First, in her twilight slumbers heard
 The Norman's curfew-bell ! "

It is to be regretted that the poet did not stop at this point, and leave the anticlimax for a separate and all-American effort. But King George's Lexington and Concord Percy was too much for Halleck the patriot — and also Halleck the poet.

Clement C. Moore has a place among the writers who were inspired by Dutch traditions to produce a Knickerbocker literature. No doubt the theological professor expected to rest his fame upon the first Hebrew and English lexicon compiled in this country, or upon his version of Lavardin's "History of George Castriot." Instead, when he is placed among the immortals, it will be in recognition of his "Visit from St. Nicholas," which all children know begins:

"'T was the night before Christmas, when all through the house
 Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse."

But, as Sir Thomas Brown might have said, no man knoweth the word whereby he shall be remembered, or chooseth the stone for his own monument. Possibly the restorer of the old Dutch legend might now prefer to be associated with children's Christmas joy forever rather than with political and theological writings of consequence in his time and of little account in ours.

Gulian C. Verplanck was a New Yorker whose services to literature entitle him to mention. First a lawyer, then a politician, and afterward a lecturer in divinity, his pen was seldom idle. Verplanck. "Essays on Revealed Religion" and on the "Doctrine of Contrasts" were the more substantial result, while "The State Triumvirate" and the "Ceremony of Installation" are in a lighter vein. As a member of Congress he was prominent in obtaining the extension of the term of copyright from twenty-eight to forty-two years. Later he was associated with Sands and Bryant in the "Talisman," a publication containing some of the best writing of the time. In his addresses on art, history, and literature and "The Influence and Use of Liberal Studies," and especially on "The American Scholar," he anticipated some of the more recent essayists and orators who have made kindred themes the subjects of high discussion. As an early editor of Shakespeare's plays he did much for his countrymen in pointing out in the text colloquial expressions which had been called Americanisms because they had been dropped in England, — another instance of the agency of colonies in retarding changes in language. For example — one that he does not mention — our word "baggage" was used in a passport issued by Edward VI. in 1547. Why should an American use the later "luggage"? Possibly for the same reason that he

turns up his trousers in pleasant weather on Broadway — “because it rains in London.”

There were other Knickerbockers less distinguished then, or perhaps less familiar now, as Sands and Hoffman, Morris and Woodworth, Clarke, Brooks, and Benjamin, Clason and Clinch and others, who wrote lightly and pleasantly or majestically and heavily and sometimes voluminously. Their books are now dusted principally by antiquarians, and the authors themselves, as stars of the third and fourth magnitude, grew dim as the day grew brighter.

William Cullen Bryant may be considered as an adopted member of the Knickerbocker group, since he was not born in New York, but on the Hampshire hills of **Bryant.** western Massachusetts. However, he was not long in finding his way to the metropolis and to the little circle who made it the literary centre of the country at the time. A copy of Irving's “Knickerbocker's History” had travelled into the lonely village where young Bryant was reading law and gave him a taste of what was possible in lower latitudes. Hitherto his reading had been among the professional books of his father's medical library, varied by the Latin poets, the Greek Testament, Watts' Hymns, and Pope's “Iliad.” But meter and rhyme were a part of his nature and blossomed out in juvenile verses, religious and political, to the delight of his father and to his own subsequent chagrin.

To these there were two notable exceptions, left at home when he went away to practise law in Great Barrington. His father found them one day, six years afterward, when rummaging in a drawer, read them himself and to a neighbor, and without asking his son's

permission started post-haste for Boston and the editor of the "North American Review," then a two-year-old magazine.

If this overland journey of one hundred miles was a remarkable instance of paternal pride, there was something to warrant it, for one of the poems was "Thanatopsis" and the other "An Inscription upon the Entrance to a Wood." The first of these was enough to establish the author as a poet of no common order. It came to a reflective people in an age when the shadow of gloom had not entirely passed, having a sad note that appeals to every reader in sober days, and raising visions of the sublimity, majesty, and vastness of the universe which bring a pleasing awe to the soul of man in the presence of infinity and futurity. It is a poem of the intellect rather than the heart, grand, austere, solemn, a funeral anthem of the human race.

"The golden sun,
The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,
Are shining on the sad abodes of death
Through the still lapse of ages."

Mystery, immensity, and eternity are over and around the endless procession of life toward the grave. But upon it the poet looks with the undisturbed spirit of an upright man who accepts the mighty order which he cannot obstruct or change. His unfaltering trust is in the Power which is beneath the majestic movement toward repose. A few called it pagan verse, not discerning the unity of its theme or its fidelity to the title—"A View of Death"—not of life or immortality. He simply restricted himself to his topic, without even touching upon the hopeful reflections about the future in

which another would have taken refuge. With all the tokens of genius in it the verse has the chill of November, and the sky must have been cold and the trees bare when it was written. Besides, the author had been reading Blair and Porteus and Kirke White on death and the grave. It seems like the last note of a New England druid bard prolonging a refrain from previous centuries, but in a strain of which the province had never dreamed, and to which, it must be said, the poet himself never quite attained again.

But he wrote other poems that readers like better than this requiem of the universe. And in them all is the note of nature, struck by a sympathetic observer — not of her gracious moods alone, but of the severe and fateful as well. Out of them all, however, he drew lessons of truth or beauty or morals. He finds the law of guidance in the flight of the lone waterfowl across the December sky, and of hope in the fringed gentian blossoming on the border of winter. The "Forest Hymn," the "Death of the Flowers," the "Song of the Lover," and others longer or shorter are charged with the bloom of summer and the frosts of winter and tinted with hues of spring and autumn. He inclines to the latter with the sober inheritance from a Puritan ancestry and writes :

"The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year,
Of wailing winds and naked woods and meadows brown and sere."

Yet into "The Little People of the Snow" he has put a sympathetic strain, such as is not always found with eulogists of winter, and never with shivering grumblers about it. But then, he survived the rigors of twenty Cummington winters before he went to New York and

the sultriness of as many summers, and thereupon could also write :

“The quiet August noon has come,
A slumbrous silence fills the sky ;
The fields are still, the woods are dumb ;
In glassy sleep the waters lie.”

Open the volume of one hundred and sixteen poems anywhere, and some phase of nature is presented, usually in her quiet majesty. Sometimes patriotic and national strains appear, as in the “Song of Marion’s Men,” “The Green Mountain Boys,” “Our Country’s Call,” and “O Mother of a Mighty Race,” but the return is speedy to “The White-Footed Deer,” “The Hunter of the Prairies,” and “The Death of the Flowers.” He is preëminently the poet of woods and waters, of earth and sky, of summer and winter, of the times and seasons, the days and the years.

There is no room to speak of the vocation of his life as an editor, which he pursued from his thirtieth year, when he came to New York in 1825 as a literary adventurer. His connection for fifty years with its principal paper, the “Evening Post,” belongs to the history of journalism, and is as remarkable as his avocation of poet. It was the latter that he loved best; as a poet he wished to be known. But he never allowed one pursuit to interfere with the other. The city and his office were for the editor; the retreat at “Roslyn” for the poet when the day’s work was done. In this way he kept the inheritance of his youth until fourscore years of labor in the great city and in the greater nation had passed over him. In a sense he remained a New Englander to the last in the seclusion of his editorial room and in the retirement of

his Long Island country house. He was always lifting up his eyes to the Hampshire hills, whence came his strength of poetic inspiration, and whither at length he used to return every summer to the home of his youth.

Bryant's verse will always have its own charm for New Englanders and for their descendants wherever they may live. They love the moods of nature with which the fathers played and fought by turns. The viking blood in their veins still makes them sing :

"The winds from off the Norseman hills
Do shriek a fearsome song ;
There's music in the shrieking winds
That blow my bark along."

Besides, there is in his poems the flower of that imagination which, in spite of his pretended indifference, was in the Puritan's soul. It finally blossomed out early in the last century like a crocus on the sunny edge of a snow-drift in northwestern Massachusetts. It revelled in the solemn, the sublime, the severe, as the forefathers had for two hundred years. Moreover, the first eminent poet had all their conscientiousness in his performance of his task, even if he did break with their Calvinism. His measure is exact, his rhyme is perfect, and, more than all, his moral tone is without a flaw. Strength and health are in his verse. Those will read it whose mental constitution can stand the north wind, and who

"In the love of nature hold
Communion with her visible forms ;
The hills rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun ; the vales
Stretching in pensive quietness between ;
The venerable woods — rivers that move
In majesty and the complaining brooks
That make the meadows green ; and poured round all,
Old ocean's gray and melancholy waste."

Bryant had his limitations, as every writer has who contributes to a nation's literature without attempting everything in it. He did not aspire to an epic, being content to make a good translation of Homer. He did not pretend to be an orator, although he could deliver just and noble eulogies upon his early contemporaries and others. Beyond the narrow compass of his nature-songs he did not often venture, but within it he commanded the earliest recognition of American verse abroad, and won a permanent place among the poets of clear vision, calm contemplation, and profound sympathy with every mood of the natural world and every manifestation of its beauty and its power.

The solemn undertone heard in "Thanatopsis," the first of his verse, is audible in the last of it, "The Flood of Years," as in much that falls between.

"A mighty Hand, from an exhaustless Urn,
Pours forth the never-ending Flood of Years
Among the nations. How the rushing waves
Bear all before them! On their foremost edge,
And there alone, is Life. The Present there
Tosses and foams, and fills the air with roar
Of mingled noises. There are they who toil,
And they who strive, and they who feast, and they
Who hurry to and fro. The sturdy swain —
Woodman and delver with the spade — is there
And busy artisan beside his bench;
And pallid student with his written roll,
A moment on the mounting billow seen,
The flood sweeps over them and they are gone.

Lo ! wider grows the stream — a sea-like flood
Saps earth's walled cities ; massive palaces
Crumble before it ; fortresses and towers
Dissolve in the swift waters ; populous realms
Swept by the torrent see their ancient tribes

Engulfed and lost ; their very languages
 Stifled, and never to be uttered more.

What is there beyond ;
 Hear what the wise and good have said. Beyond
 That belt of darkness, still the Years roll on
 More gently, but with not less mighty sweep.
 They gather up again and softly bear
 All the sweet lives that late were overwhelmed
 And lost to sight. . . .

So they pass
 From stage to stage along the shining course
 Of that bright river, broadening like a sea.

A Present in whose reign the eternal Change
 That waits on growth and action shall proceed
 With everlasting Concord hand in hand."

XIX

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

A NEW JERSEY judge who had acquired tracts of land among and around the sources of the Susquehanna in central New York, built a stately mansion on the shore of Otsego lake and removed his family thither in 1790. His son James, then a year old, grew up in this wilderness in the midst of a sort of baronial grandeur among Indians, trappers, and the dependents of a landed proprietor. He learned many things not put down in the school books and other books which were in his father's library, things which were to be of value to himself, and of great interest to others when he should begin to tell about them. The lore of woods and waters, the craft of savage and beast, the rival cunning of an invading race, were lessons which were acquired without urging. In seventeen years his education in woodcraft was finished, with some knowledge of books in three years at Yale. Then he went to sea and learned something about its mysteries and more about ships and sailors. Later, as a naval officer stationed on Lake Ontario, he came to know the ways of the inland seas. Next he married, stayed three years longer in Cooperstown, and went to Mamaroneck to live in quiet contentment within reach of Knickerbocker friends until he was seized with the notion, at the age of twenty-nine, that he could write a better novel than the one he happened to be reading. He

Education
and Literary
Ventures.

began to write "Precaution." If he had taken a little himself he would not have written the dreary story of English society life, about which he then knew nothing. But at that time all American authors had to do imitative work before they began to quarry the wealth of material close at hand. In this very year of 1820 Irving was writing the "Sketch Book," half English in character. Cooper was next urged to follow Scott, who had just finished the historical "Ivanhoe." The outcome was the "Spy," a novel of the Revolution, already beginning to be historical after forty years. The scene was laid in the writer's neighborhood, the old neutral ground between two armies, plundered by both. The book was a great success at home and abroad, in England as well as America. Translated into French, it found its way into other languages and many lands, into Persia, Arabia, and the far East. The new nation had now a novelist of its own to portray its new life to all the world.

This was still more evident when "The Pioneers" followed two years afterward. This time the author worked another field with which he was even more familiar — the wilderness, where he had grown up. Harvey Birch, the spy, was succeeded by Natty Bumppo, the backwoodsman, appealing to that aboriginal love of adventure and of the forest which clings to every boy like a heritage of the primeval life of the race. It was next to returning to the wigwam and the chase and the tribal feud. There had been nothing like it in Europe since the stone age. Here it was the experience of a young writer who was throwing only a thin tissue of romance over the trapper and the savage he had seen a hundred times. The story was as good as true and as interesting as fic-

Stories of
the Border.

tion, and always a favorite of the author's. Sometimes descriptive padding blocked the progress of events, but impatient readers early learn the skipping trick, sometimes to their loss and again to their gain. But Cooper had created or translated from life a great character, of whom he made the best and the most, running him through the series of five romances which bear the name of "Leatherstocking." He is the primitive American, evolved from two centuries' contact of the early colonist and adventurer with the wilderness. He has taken on its color and become a part of its life, a competitor with the wild beast and wild Indian in the struggle for existence, without being degraded to the level of either. The nobler teachings of nature have fallen upon a white soul full of native justice and true nobility until a type of humanity is produced which might be taken as pristine in its native simplicity and honesty. It is barely possible that a travestied impression of this original creation has survived in the foreign mind, making it think of all Americans as backwoodsmen, with more or less of acquired guile, whose present counterparts are the spectacular creatures of a wild west show. This incongruous specimen should be distinguished from Cooper's frontiersman. Also his Indian from those seen at a railway station on the plains. The old charge that he idealized the red proprietors of the woods and waters may be partly met by saying that the race has not been improved by rum or the ethics of traders and the agents of a paternal government. He doubtless had his unlovely streaks, but the early education furnished by the British-American settler developed the vices of both races in a fertile soil.

To learn what was Cooper's restoration of the aboriginal

type the five Leatherstocking tales will be read, and in the following order if the career of the woodsman is to be traced to the end: "The Deerslayer," "The Last of the Mohicans," "The Pathfinder," "The Pioneers," and "The Prairie," although this is not the order in which they were written.

When Cooper had gratified his love of nature by picturing life upon the frontier in "The Pioneers," he turned to his recollections of sea-faring exploits and wrote "The Pilot," impelled, it is said, by Scott's blunders in his "Pirate." Two fresh fields had been broken when he entered upon one old as the sea, and cultivated ever since Ulysses sailed the "unharvested deep," from which, however, a large crop of stories has been taken from Homer's time onward. But there was enough left in its depths and on its surface to make a most successful story in the hands of a genuine sailor, as Cooper was. A large and breezy sort of man, he loved the wide ocean next to the boundless forest. He was not always finically careful about details of composition, but he made no landsman's mistakes about ships' rigging and sailors' lingo. A man-of-war was in his day a thing of beauty when under full sail, if not so terrific in battle as its hardshell successor. The romance of the engine-room is now the popular topic on seven seas, but Cooper's wing-and-wing fancies will always people a receding age with a race of fighting sailors who belonged to a perilous time in our early history. Their conflicts with a great maritime power can best be understood in the pages of "The Pilot" and "The Red Rover." In the departments of sea and frontier life Cooper became our first historical novelist, having Scott only for a rival,

and that without being his imitator. On British ground their books sold side by side, and had the same translators into foreign tongues. Each in his own way brought great credit to his country and great renown to himself. But it was in Sir Walter's own Edinburgh and in its "Review" that the words were written: "The empire of the sea is conceded to Cooper by acclamation."

Every writer must have his ups and downs, and Cooper's alternated with customary regularity or irregularity. When he attempted to repeat the success of his first American novel, "The Spy," in "Lionel Lincoln" he did not attain eminence. Not through any lack of painstaking, for he wearied himself in preparatory research, only to add one more instance in proof of the fact that a work may be overdone for the popular taste. Readers do not mind a little margin for history to work loosely in when it is embodied in a story, and especially as in good histories there are conflicting accounts of the same occurrence. At any rate, the novelist has the painter's license to make history picturesque and events to occur in the order they should have happened for the best dramatic effect. A genuine artist does not hesitate to set to one side an obtrusive tree in the middle foreground of his landscape. Why should not a good novelist follow his example? Darwin has called the slaying of a beautiful theory by an ugly fact one of the tragedies of life. Therefore the romancer will not be too considerate of inconvenient truth when he is following his craft. A regard for exactness troubled Cooper less than his departure from his own special stamping ground into a territory which was more successfully explored by the introspective novelists of a later day. His was the season of the outer world of action,

Uneven
Work.

whether of chivalry and border wars, with Scott, or of the forest and the sea, with himself. What a person's thoughts, emotions and motives were was interpreted by his actions. To describe these significantly was the high attainment of the romancer of the first quarter of the century. Hawthorne and George Eliot were later arrivals.

In "The Last of the Mohicans," 1826, Cooper picked himself up again, being on his own ground once more, hand in hand with Leatherstocking, now in the manly prime of a forester, than whom no finer woodland character has been created since the day of the mythical Robin Hood. Nor was the American specimen an outlaw and a princely thief, as became the Saxon under Norman oppression. Instead, he had every homely virtue that might adorn a nobleman of nature unspoiled by contact with scoundrels of the settlements or the town. With this book Cooper achieved his greatest success at home and abroad among the multitudes who read what they like and turn a deaf ear to the charmer critics, charm they never so wisely. These did by no means agree among themselves, and thereby made good their title. As a rule, they put their ears to the ground to catch the rumble and the grumble of British criticism, by which to be guided in their own. They could not believe that America had produced anything equal to the Waverley novels until Germany had spoken with the authority of a bystander reading both authors in the same English language. It was as likely to estimate Scott by Cooper as Americans were to gauge Cooper by Scott.

At this point the successful novelist was able to go abroad for seven years, and incidentally to enjoy the tribute which was freely accorded by foreigners who had

confidence in their own estimates of literary values, even if they did not enrich the author by a share in the profits on pirated editions of his works. Yet they gave him cordial welcome, and would have made a lion of him if he had permitted the show. But natural scenery was more attractive to him than social displays, and he found his enjoyment in the sunny skies of Italy, the mountains of Switzerland, and the old German cities. Meantime his pen was busy with "The Prairie," "The Red Rover," "The Wept of Wishton Wish," and "The Water Witch." Of these "The Red Rover" was most approved, surpassing "The Pilot" even in its interest to lovers of sea stories. Imitations of these stories had been springing up after his first venture, like catboats following afar in the wake of a racer. His own books, however, were multiplying faster than all their imitations, being published as soon as written in over thirty different places in Europe, and read as far east as Egypt, Jerusalem, and Ispahan.

It was now 1830, the high-tide of his prosperity. Then it turned to the ebb. The story of its decline is long and tedious. It began here before his residence in Europe. There his imperious temper and ardent patriotism could not brook the evil speech against the young republic which he everywhere heard. He became the champion of its new ideas and liberties, and was assailed as its volunteer representative. On the other hand, there were ways of his countrymen which he found difficult to defend, and told them so, exasperating them in turn. He thus contrived to place himself between two fires, and made enemies by thousands in two hemispheres. Imperialists hated him for his republicanism, and freemen were ready to crush him for daring to say that they were

In Foreign
Lands.

Controversy.

not time's noblest offspring. Accordingly both sides pounced upon him and his books. It was more difficult to injure his work than himself, for the praise of his romance had been too general and unqualified to be reversed all at once. So the attack was made personal, and critical too, so far as consistency would permit, or inconsistency, for that matter. Newspapers ran wild in a field of slander, whose borders had not been defined in the direction of libel. Cooper determined to have the boundary line run, and prosecuted one and another with greater success than could have been expected had not offences been too glaring to be denied.

Meantime he went on castigating foreigners and the home-born with his versatile pen. In the "Letters of a
And
Criticism. Traveling Bachelor," "Residence in Europe," "Letter to His Countrymen," "Homeward Bound," and "Home as Found," he is the censor of his native land, and shared the hatred which follows that official, especially when self-appointed. He was not fitted to lessen the inevitable unpleasantness attached to his assumed mission. His own arrogance and violence provoked a similar spirit in others, which retorted in virulent personal abuse. This was checked in its public expression by lawsuits, which had the good effect of limiting the license of the press in personal matters, but the rancor of his enemies was undiminished for years. It was fostered by positions which he took in his "Naval History of the United States," contrary to the popular view of the real hero in the battle of Lake Erie, but fortified by subsequent decisions in arbitration. In this case, as in others, Cooper was not so far from right as from urbanity and suavity in maintaining it. Still, it must be conceded that he had

not much encouragement to cultivate these virtues. Nor had he much inclination. Hence it was "Athanasius against the world" once more. He more than held his own, but the record of the contest does not add to his literary reputation.

It may be guessed that the quality of his work was not improved. That he turned out "The Pathfinder" and "The Deerslayer" in the midst of these broils indicates the ability of disciplined genius to abstract itself from the disturbances incident to life or sometimes to its own eccentricities. But while in these two books he repeated his former successes, the average of his performances was lower, especially if his controversial writings are included in the general estimate. It was when he turned to the forest or the sea and recalled the associations of his earlier and happier days that he appeared to forget his enemies and his critics, and to run free with the sailor, the trapper, and the Indian.

In these thirty volumes of creations he has had plenty of imitators, but no superior or equal. A swarm of cheap American tales of the frontier, the prairie, and the mountains, overspreading the land in the last half century like grasshoppers, shows that the popular appetite for aboriginal adventure is always keen and often satisfied with indifferent fare. In the present day of the society novel, including all its grades, there is less chance for earlier and less artistic productions to catch the general eye, but the American boy — and he is sometimes well along in years — will have his hours when he will be irresistibly impelled to take to the woods or to go to sea. Next to doing either is to read Cooper. The uncritical age of youth is the best time to read him. The

Popularity.

country itself was in its youth when he took it by storm, and it was a boyish quarrel that alternated with boyish enthusiasm. But now and then there will be an old boy who will turn to the romances which were the delight of his youth to see if there is still in them the odor of pines and of the salt sea, and if they will bring back memories of bright days when his highest ambition was to roam the woods with a rifle or to sail the Spanish main. Therefore our earliest novelist who came to stay is still a welcome guest, more and more as unhappy controversy recedes, and as the disposition to recall early features of American life grows stronger and stronger.

A few paragraphs from "The Last of the Mohicans," will bring back memories of the books which used to stir the aboriginal blood that runs in boys.

"Throughout the whole of these trying moments Uncas alone had preserved his serenity. He looked on the preparations with a steady eye, and when the tormentors came to seize him he met them with a firm and upright attitude. One among them, if possible more fierce and savage than his fellows, seized the hunting shirt of the young warrior, and at a single effort tore it from his body. Then, with a yell of frantic pleasure, he leaped toward his unresisting victim, and prepared to lead him to the stake. But, at that moment, when he appeared most a stranger to the feelings of humanity, the purpose of the savage was arrested as suddenly as if a supernatural agency had interposed in behalf of Uncas. The eyeballs of the Delaware seemed to start from their sockets; his mouth opened, and his whole form became frozen in an attitude of amazement. Raising his hand with a slow and regulated motion, he pointed with a finger to the bosom of the captive. His companions crowded about him in wonder, and every eye was, like his own, fastened intently on the figure of a small tortoise, beautifully tattooed on the breast of the prisoner in a light blue tint.

"For a single instant Uncas enjoyed his triumph, smiling calmly on the scene. Then motioning the crowd away with a high and haughty sweep of his arm, he advanced in front of the nation with the air of a king, and spoke in a voice louder than the murmur of admiration that ran through the multitude.

"'Men of the Lenni Lenape,' he cried, 'my race upholds the earth ! Your feeble tribe stands on my shell ! What fire, that a Delaware can light, would burn the child of my fathers ? The blood that came of such a stock would smother your flames ! Mine is the grandfather of nations !'

"'Who art thou ?' demanded Tamenund, rising at the startling tones he heard, more than at any meaning conveyed by the language of the prisoner.

"'Uncas, the son of Chingachgook,' answered the captive, modestly, turning from the nation, and bending his head in reverence to the other's character and years ; 'a son of the Great Unamis [Turtle.]'

"'The hour of Tamenund [Tammany] is nigh !' exclaimed the sage. 'The day is come at last to the night ; I thank the Manitto that one is here to fill my place at the council fire. Uncas, the child of Uncas is found ! Let the eyes of a dying eagle gaze on the rising sun.'"

The following abridgment will remind some readers of "The Pilot" which filled their young heads with dreams of adventure on the high seas.

"'Now is the time to watch her closely, Mr. Griffith,' the pilot cried. 'Here we get the true tide and the real danger. Place the quartermaster of your ship in those chains, and let an officer stand by him and see that he gives us the right water.'

"'I will take that office on myself,' said the captain ; 'pass a light into the weather main-chains.'

"'Stand by your braces !' exclaimed the pilot, with startling quickness. 'Heave away that lead !'

"These preparations taught the crew to expect the crisis, and

every officer and man stood in fearful silence at his assigned station, awaiting the issue of the trial.

"While this deep expectation pervaded the frigate, the piercing cry of the leadsman as he called, 'By the mark seven,' rose above the tempest, crossed over the decks, and appeared to pass away to the leeward, borne on the blast like the warnings of some water-spirit.

" ' 'T is well,' returned the pilot calmly ; ' try it again.'

"The short pause was succeeded by another cry, ' And a half five.'

" 'She shoals ! she shoals !' exclaimed Griffith ; ' keep her a good full.'

"The third call, ' By the deep four,' was followed by a prompt direction from the stranger to tack.

"The vessel rose slowly from the inclined position into which she had been forced by the tempest, and the sails were shaking violently, as if to release themselves from their confinement, while the ship stemmed the billows, when the well-known voice of the sailing-master was heard from the forecastle :

" 'Breakers ! breakers, dead ahead !'

"This appalling sound seemed yet to be lingering about when a second voice cried :

" 'Breakers on our lee bow !'

"There was no time for reply ; the ship had been rapidly running into the wind, and as the efforts of the crew were paralyzed by the contradictory orders they had heard, she gradually lost her way, and in a few seconds all her sails were taken aback.

"Before the crew understood the situation the pilot applied the trumpet to his mouth, and in a voice that rose above the tempest, thundered forth his orders. The helm was kept fast, the head-yards swung up heavily against the wind, and the vessel was soon whirling round on her heel with a retrograde movement. . . . For an hour longer there was a fearful struggle for their preservation, the channel becoming at each step more complicated. . . . At length the ship reached a point where she appeared to be rushing directly into the jaws of destruction, when suddenly her course was changed, and her head recede-

rapidly from the wind, and quick as thought the frigate was gliding along the channel before the wind. . . .

“The lieutenant grasped the hand of the other as he said :

“‘You have this night proved yourself a faithful pilot, and such a seaman as the world cannot equal.’”

The naval battles in this book and in the “Red Rover” are interesting reading alongside Spanish-American accounts of turret-gun, armor-plate warfare a century and a quarter later. Methods have changed, but results are relatively similar. Will the steel volcanoes afford as much inspiration to the coming Cooper as the bristling hulls and clouds of canvas did to our first novelist of the sea ?

XX

NATHANIEL P. WILLIS AND BAYARD TAYLOR

THERE are names in the history of any literature which become faint echoes of their former importance. Once they were shouted by the multitude; now they are recalled as having a half-familiar sound and suggesting further inquiry.

If a popular vote had been taken in the second quarter of the century for the most widely admired writer of emotional verse and of light and graceful prose, Nathaniel Parker Willis would have received the majority of suffrages. He was another New Englander who drifted into the literary coterie of New York in the years when it was the centre of attraction for young writers. Born in Portland, Maine, with the advantages of a publisher for a grandfather and the editor of a religious paper for his father, the young student at Yale illustrated the law of heredity in his college course by writing poems almost as precocious as Bryant's and of far greater emotional power. To be sure, they were scriptural in tone, but tradition has it that this was not due to an overreligiousness on the part of the poet himself. Yet the same may be said of Young's "Night Thoughts," that solemn book over which our fathers used to pore and fall asleep in blissful unconsciousness of the somewhat worldly-mindedness of the courtly author. Still there is no good reason why the product of a poet's best impulses should not be taken for what it is worth to the reader in reproducing

Early
Promise.

similar emotions in his own mind. Biography may explain literature, but it need not necessarily qualify it. Accordingly, these "Scripture Sketches" of the college youth may be allowed to stand for those better moods of reflection and aspiration which alternate with academic surpluses of animal spirits, for whose effervescence no gymnasium was supplied at Yale in 1825. As offsets to what then took the place of athletics in various devices for keeping a high temperature in the old town Willis could write such verse as "Absalom" and "Jephtha's Daughter."

"The pall was settled. He who slept beneath
Was straightened for the grave; and as the folds
Sunk to the still proportions, they betray'd
The matchless symmetry of Absalom.
His hair was yet unshorn, and silken curls
Were floating round the tassels as they sway'd
To the admitted air, as glossy now
As when, in hours of gentle dalliance, bathing
The snowy fingers of Judea's daughters.
His helm was at his feet: his banner, soiled
With trailing through Jerusalem, was laid,
Reversed beside him: and the jewell'd hilt,
Whose diamonds lit the passage of his blade,
Rested, like mockery, on his cover'd brow."

"The king stood still
Till the last echo died; then, throwing off
The sackcloth from his brow, and laying back
The pall from the still features of his child,
He bow'd his head upon him, and broke forth
In the resistless eloquence of woe."

But Jephtha's was the greater woe for the daughter
doomed by his own rash vow:

"A pallid man
Was stretching out his hands to heaven,
As if he would pray'd, but had no words—

And she who was to die, the calmest one
 In Israel at that hour, stood up alone,
 And waited for the sun to set. Her face
 Was pale, but very beautiful — her lip
 Had a more delicate outline, and the tint
 Was deeper; but her countenance was like
 The majesty of angels."

This is not Miltonic, to be sure, but it is an improvement upon the Canaanitish verse of Yale in the days of Dwight.

Literature did not offer so many paths to a college graduate turned loose seventy-five years ago as in these later times. It was a confident or desperate youth who dared to trust to the pen for a living. Willis, however, had been commended for his college pieces, and had won a publisher's prize of fifty dollars for the best gift-book poem. With this send-off the recent graduate undertook the editorship of a series of volumes published by that "Peter Parley" to whom sundry American authors of distinction owed their bringing out. Then the "American Magazine" was established, to be finally merged into the "New York Mirror," to which Willis contributed editorial letters during two years' travel in the old world. These "Pencilings by the Way" were the first valuable specimens of the abundant literature of American travel, often more interesting to the writer than the reader. This writer, however, had the pencil quality in his pen, and could put life and picturesqueness into worn paths and dull statistics. Besides, he was favored with passports as an attaché of the American minister at Paris, giving him access to courtly circles in Europe and the East. With such facilities the record of travel made by such an observer was a revelation to those even who had been over the ground and a delight to those who had not.

Light Prose
 and Verse.

The sale of the "Pencilings" was greatly increased by a savage review in the "Quarterly," and a personal article by Captain Marryatt occasioned a meeting for satisfaction in which Willis came off best.

Four years of residence abroad satisfied this travel and society loving American for a while, who then took up his abode far from cities and men in his cottage at Glenmary, on the Susquehanna, where he wrote the "Letters from Under a Bridge." Then came the financial reverse, which in so many instances has been the spur to easy-going loiterers along the highway of letters, driving him back to New York and to work on the "Corsair," a weekly journal which had the distinction of employing Thackeray as a contributor before he had grown so great as in the days of "The Newcomes." This paper was soon abandoned for the "Evening Mirror," the demands of which undermined his health, resulting, after a third voyage to Europe, in the establishment of the "Home Journal" and insuring a more moderate pace in literary labor.

The above particulars have been mentioned to illustrate the life of a man of letters in the second generation of the century. It was the period between the news-letter and the journal, with the permanent magazine in its present form still in the distance. Whatever was printed was necessarily brief, or cut into short sections if a long story entailing the reader's impatience or expectancy. A volume of such brevities had usually the same choppy character, with the advantage of being laid down and taken up at odd intervals,—a point in favor of a fragmentary and discursive author like Willis. Yet in the course of a lifetime he produced many volumes. To read half of them would be worse than a waste of time. People did not lose

many hours together over them when they were published, since they came out for the most part in weekly instalments. On the other hand, if one were stranded in the country with "Hurrygraphs" or "Outdoors at Idlewild" or "People I Have Met" or "Famous Persons and Places" for his only reading, he would find more hours pleasantly occupied than with some more pretentious books. The range is wide over many lands, scenes, and celebrities. Much light is thrown upon contemporary history. The manners of a bygone period in letters and politics in our own country are graphically depicted. Life in other and older lands is contrasted with the simplicity of republican ways, and the scenery of the unbroken wilderness with the artificiality of landscapes that had absorbed the labor of generations. To take a few titles at random from a single volume: — "Letters" from Plymouth, Cape Cod, the Delaware, the Hudson, on Edward Everett, Calhoun, and Benton, Fenimore Cooper, Daniel Webster, Irving, Whipple, Society and Manners in New York, Shoddy Aristocracy, and a score of similar home topics about which everybody was surprised to find how much Willis could tell them. He had an artist's eye to see the picturesque in familiar objects and the artist's touch to bring out the unexpected beauty or interest of the commonplace.

Letters from famous places abroad revealed things unseen to the dwellers in them, and had a twofold interest to untravelled Americans. They depicted London and Edinburgh, not forgetting memorable events in their past nor overlooking a Scotch breakfast in the present. Shooting in the highlands relieves an account of the "Blackwood" writers, and the Duke of Aberdeen's hounds are given a place near the personal beauty

Travellers'
Letters.

of the English. In a second visit to England he gets a glimpse of the queen, in the third year of her reign, riding from the palace on horseback, with Lord Melbourne on one side and Lord Byron on the other; admires the cavalcade of equipages in Piccadilly, goes to Brighton by stage, meets the Persian ambassador and the king of Oude, dines with royalty, breakfasts with nobility, lunches with authors now called classic, and is everywhere fêted and flattered. Spiteful people at home said that his head was turned, as the treatment he received would have turned their own; but the surfeit of it appears to have been an antidote, and he went on year after year writing lightly and gracefully about places of interest and people of distinction to the delight of all readers of his journal, the "Spectator" of its age.

He was a late survivor of the Knickerbocker group, and in some degree a representative of its characteristics in prose or verse. A ready, though careful writer, of quick perceptions rather than of profound views, with a knack of making the most of ordinary topics, and possessing an instinctive knowledge of the attainments of the average reader in his time, he did successful work for that time without giving much thought to the verdict of posterity. If he had regarded it he might have missed its favor and that of his constituency also. It is something to have won the last. There is more in his best writings that is perennial than those who have not read them might suspect. If he cannot be reckoned among the company of immortals, "limited," he should not be overlooked in that other class of men who are useful to their own generation. As he himself wrote:

"White
Poplar
Literature."

"I learned also, to my comfort, that nature publishes some volumes with many leaves, which are not intended to be of any posthumous value—the white poplar not lasting three moonlight nights after it is cut down. Even with such speedy decay, however, it throws a pleasant shade while it flourishes; and so, white poplar literature, recognized as a class in literature, should have its brief summer of indulgence."

Many younger writers had good reason to be grateful to him for his encouragement in their early efforts. He was kind and generous toward all sincere aspirants, and brought out some who, like Lowell, attained a more lasting renown than their early patron.

One might go farther afield with Willis than in his "Trip to Scotland" and get less for his trouble. And in that chilly country he might find less interesting gossip than the remarks about "Christopher North."

"I was punctual to my hour, and found the poet standing before the fire with his coat skirts expanded—a large, muscular man, something slovenly in his dress, but with the manner and face of high good humor, and remarkably frank and prepossessing address. While he was finding me a chair, and saying civil things of the noble friend who had been the medium of our acquaintance, I was trying to reconcile my idea of him, gathered from portraits and descriptions, with the person before me. His head is exceedingly ample, his eye blue and restless, his mouth full of character, and his hair of a light sandy color takes very much its own way, and has the wildness of a Highlander's.

"He talked of American poets, praised Percival and Pierpont, and expressed great pleasure at the criticisms of his own works that had appeared in American papers and magazines. If I had wished to remind him that he had not breakfasted, I should have had no opportunity, for the stream of his eloquence ran on without a break; and eloquent it certainly was.

"I asked if Blackwood was a man of refined literary taste.

“‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I would trust his opinion of a book sooner than any man I know. He might not publish everything he approved, for it was his business to print only things that would sell; and, therefore, there are perhaps many authors who would complain of him; but if his opinion had been against my own, and it had been my own book, I should believe he was right, and give up my own judgment. He was a patron of literature, and it owes him much. He is a loss to the world.’”

And then follows chat about the “Noctes” and its company of wits at Ambrose’s, redolent of usquebaugh, and about Lockhart and Scott, Southey and Wordsworth, until Willis drove away to dine with Jeffrey and his American wife, at whose table politics happened just then to prevail over letters.

Greater authors than Willis have been fêted abroad since 1830, but few have met with more celebrities, or been more graciously received in many lands, or in turn have been able to make their “pencilings by the way” more agreeable to readers of several grades; for these notes of his cover every variety of topic from royalty to poultry, and from Cape Cod to Damascus. The illumination which his gossipy letters to contemporary journals throw upon life and literature cannot well be disregarded by any student of the period in which he lived and wrote.

One of those who were always ready to acknowledge indebtedness to his literary hospitality was Bayard Taylor, a Pennsylvania youth who was blessed with visions of authorship and travel, but troubled with scant means and opportunities. He acquired enough Latin at school to give him a clew to the Romance languages, and obtained the technical education of a

Bayard
Taylor.

printing office. To these he added the larger education of a literary tramp in foreign countries, writing letters to newspapers for his support, and after two years returned to New York for fresh orders. The metropolis was still keeping good its title to the largest literary cultivation in the country, if not the highest. What remained of the old Knickerbocker school was doing fair work, and new material was added from time to time. Conspicuous among those already spoken of were Morris, Hoffman, the Duyckincks and "certain women of their company," besides sundry bohemian encampments on the borderland between aspiration and performance, all together causing some one to define the Knickerbocker school as "composed of authors whom we all remember as forgotten." To the survivors Willis, Griswold, and Hoffman introduced Taylor, and within three months he had engagements to write for four journals, besides a place as chief of the literary department of the "Tribune." He was at home in this diversified occupation, writing fifteen hours a day, turning his hand to anything demanded for the daily press, doing his work so carefully and well that he won a higher position and became a stockholder in the company.

California and Mexico next gratified his love of travel and adventure, and an invitation to deliver a Commencement poem at Harvard came as a tribute to his poetic talent. Then followed the inevitable abuse which dogs success, and because he happened to be the author of a prize song for Jenny Lind and seven hundred and fifty-two other competitors were not, he began to wish he had never been born a poet. Nevertheless he published "A Book of Romances, Lyrics, and Songs," and started on a long journey to Europe and the Orient, dur-

Traveller and
Journalist.

ing which he wrote letters to the "Tribune" and became the "great American traveller," as much at home in Paris or Damascus as in New York.

He would rather have been called a reporter, with true loyalty to his journalistic connections. He knew with unerring instinct what to observe and how to convey a picture of it in words to far-away readers; not with photographic detail so much as with oriental color, and that, too, without Asiatic magnificence of diction. As an outcome of his journeyings he published in one season his "Journey to Central Africa," "The Lands of the Saracen," and "Poems of the Orient," with fourteen thousand of the first two books ordered in advance. "A Visit to India, China, and Japan," followed, with more "Poems" and cyclopedia work. Then came "Northern Travel; Summer in Sweden," as the result of more journeying, succeeded by an excursion into Greece and its islands. Thus his volumes of travel at last amounted to eleven, covering the great highways and some of the byways of two hemispheres. The day of the stereopticon had not yet arrived. Even now those who do not like to go out nights to see a canvas disc eclipsed by a succession of wonders may have their compensation in staying at home with Bayard Taylor. He, too, had his seasons of lecturing in the years when the lyceums in every town employed such talent as they could afford, and many audiences were entertained and instructed by his picturesque descriptions of the Arabs, India, and Japan. These lectures he repeated one hundred and eighty times in a single year. But the wear and tear of hard journeys and bad cooking put him out of the itinerant circuit with many another brilliant speaker in that age of popular education from the platform, and he

returned to more agreeable travelling and writing in foreign lands.

Afterward he tried his hand at novel writing, producing four, of which "The Story of Kennet" is the best, and "John Godfrey's Fortunes" nearest to the writer's personal experiences as a literary worker in New York. He also attempted the drama under the titles of "The Masque of the Gods," "The Prophet," and "Prince Deukalion." Poems he was always writing, in his ambition to become a poet rather than be known as a traveller and journalist. It is not the first instance nor the last of mistaking one's real vocation. His versatility was too great and his labor in many directions too constant to permit the highest attainment in the sublimest art. An author of thirty-seven volumes cannot expect to make many of them classics. Bayard Taylor knew this, and in the manifold labors of a hurried life felt the truth of Chaucer's line:

"Na man can werk baith well and hastilie."

The distractions of diversified employment made havoc of his supreme ambitions, and disappointed in his dearest hopes he wrote:

"And still some cheaper service claims
The will that leaps to loftier call;
Some cloud is cast on splendid aims,
On power achieved some common thrall."

Nevertheless he left in the abundance of his writings much that instructs and entertains and delights. Doubtless the majority of readers would prefer the multiform results of his labor to greater excellence in a single department of it. As journalist, traveller, translator, dram-

atist, and poet, his range is wide enough and sufficiently diversified to relieve his writing from monotony and retain the reader's attention. Beyond this each one will find before reading far something that will appeal to his love of nature, his interest in things and lands remote, or his sense of poetic values. The lesson of all this long and active life is best summed up in the aspiration of the poet's own verse :

" Let higher goal and harsher way
To test our virtue then combine !
'T is not for idle ease we pray,
But freedom for our task divine."

In his "By-Ways of Europe" he shows that he took something more than staff and wallet with him.

"I had already stood in the hall of the Minnesingers on the Wartburg ; had crept into the Cave of Venus, on the mountain of Tannhäuser ; had walked through the Valley of Joy, where the two wives of the Count of Gleichen first met face to face ; and had stood on the spot where Winfried, the English apostle, cut down the Druid oaks and set up in their stead an altar to Christ. But on the northern border of Thuringia, where its last mountains look across the Golden Mead towards the dark summits of the Hartz, there stands a castle, in whose ruins sleeps the favorite tradition of Germany, — a legend which, changing with the ages, became the embodiment of an idea, and now represents the national unity, strength and freedom.

"This is the Kyffhäuser ; and the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa sleeps under it, in a crypt of the mountain, waiting for the day when the whole land, from the Baltic to the Alps shall be ready to receive a single ruler. Then he will come forth, and the lost Empire will be restored.

"It is not always best to track a legend too closely. The airy brow of Tannhäuser's Mountain proved to be a very ugly rock and very tenacious clay when I climbed it ; and I came forth

from the narrow slit of a cavern torn, squeezed out of breath, and spotted with tallow. Something out of the purple mountain and the mystery of its beautiful story has vanished since then. But the day of my departure for the Kyffhäuser was meant for an excursion into dream-land. . . . Poetry walked on my right hand, tradition on my left. History respectfully declined to join the party ; the dim, vapory, dreamful atmosphere did not suit her. Why was the dead Barbarossa supposed to be enchanted in a vault under the Kyffhäuser, a castle which he had never made his residence ? Fifteen years ago, at the foot of the Taurus, in Asia Minor, I had stood on the banks of the river in which he was drowned ; and in Tyre I saw the chapel in which, according to such history as we possess, his body was laid. Then why should he, of all the German Emperors, be chosen as the symbol of a political resurrection ? He defied the power of the popes, and was placed under the ban of the Church ; he gained some battles and lost others ; he commenced a crusade, but never returned from it ; he did something towards the creation of a middle class, but in advance of the time when such a work could have been appreciated. He was evidently a man of genius and energy, of a noble personal presence, and probably possessed that individual magnetism, the effect of which survives so long among the people ; yet all these things did not seem to constitute a sufficient explanation.

“The popularity of the Barbarossa legend, however, is not to be ascribed to anything in the Emperor’s history. In whatever way it may have been created, it soon became the most picturesque dream of German unity — a dream to which the people held fast, while the princes were doing their best to make the dream impossible. Barbarossa was not the first, nor the last, nor the best of the great Emperors, but the legend, ever wilful in its nature, fastened upon him, and Art and Literature are forced to accept what they find already accepted by the people.”

Such comment on what an ordinary tourist would call an uninteresting old ruin — judging by the pencil sketch Taylor made of it — indicates that there may be a genius

for travel, and that this traveller was something more than a sightseer. He was a peripatetic philosopher in a larger than the Aristotelian sense. He was also an artist in description, as countless portrayals of places and persons reveal in the several volumes of his works. What kind of a poet he was may be answered by these representative lines.

It may be referred to anthropologists to fix the approximate epoch when "Camadeva" — Love as differentiated from natural selection — came to primitive man.

"The sun, the moon, the mystic planets seven,
Shone with purer and serener flame,
And there was joy on Earth and joy in Heaven
When Camadeva came.

"The blossoms burst, like jewels of the air,
Putting the colors of the morn to shame ;
Breathing their odorous secrets everywhere
When Camadeva came.

"The birds, upon the tufted tamarind spray,
Sat side by side and cooed in amorous blame ;
The lion sheathed his claws and left his prey
When Camadeva came.

"The sea slept, pillowed on the happy shore ;
The mountain-peaks were bathed in rosy flame ;
The clouds went down the sky, — to mount no more
When Camadeva came.

"The hearts of all men brightened like the morn ;
The poet's harp then first deserved its fame,
For rapture sweeter than he sang was born
When Camadeva came.

"All breathing life a newer spirit quaffed,
A second life, a bliss beyond a name,
And Death, half-conquered, dropped his idle shaft
When Camadeva came."

And this on "Nubia" is good to read when life and the times are over-strenuous:

"Land of Dreams and Sleep, — a poppied land !
With skies of endless calm above her head,
The drowsy warmth of summer noonday shed
Upon her hills, and silence stern and grand
Throughout her Desert's temple-burying sand.
Before her threshold, in their ancient place,
With closed lips, and fixed, majestic face,
Noteless of Time, her dumb colossi stand.
O, pass them not with light, irreverent tread;
Respect the dream that builds her fallen throne,
And soothes her to oblivion of her woes.
Hush ! for she does but sleep ; she is not dead :
Action and Toil have made the world their own,
But she hath built an altar to Repose."

XXI

JOHN PENDLETON KENNEDY—WILLIAM GILMORE
SIMMS

IF the growth of American letters be followed along the Atlantic seaboard as well as in the time order, a phase of it will be discovered to the southward in the second quarter of the century. A few writers who were born within five or six years of 1800 had grown old enough to handle the pen with skill in the third and fourth decades. It was a time when the new American novel was disclosing a native wealth of material out of which romances could be constructed. Cooper had widened the trail which Brockden Brown had blazed through the forest, and now there were many to follow, even if they could not step in Cooper's tracks. The country was large and the wilderness vast and life multifarious. Writers might be stimulated by the prolific romancer of the woods and the sea and the battlefields of freedom without imitating him more than he had imitated another in Scotland, which was not servilely.

Passing from the New York coterie and by the little company of poets who were keeping up the literary traditions of Philadelphia as best they could, one would have found in Baltimore in 1832 a lawyer and a statesman who was showing that the South could contribute its own characteristic share to the romance of the period. John Pendleton Kennedy,

Kennedy,
Lawyer and
Novelist.

born in 1795, joined the volunteer service in the war of 1812, at the close of which he began legal studies, and in 1818 took up literary pursuits as a diversion. Politics appear to have been forced upon him with the honor of repeated elections to Congress and attendant positions of responsibility, culminating in the secretaryship of the navy, an office that has been filled several times by men of letters. Twenty years before this, in 1832, he published his first novel, "Swallow Barn; or, a Sojourn in the Old Dominion," portraying plantation life in Virginia on its white side, genial, generous, and hospitable. The sketches which are here strung on the thread of a story have a flowing ease of diction and accuracy of observation that are continually suggestive of Irving and "Bracebridge Hall." Their minuteness of descriptive detail is photographic in accuracy, leaving, also, strong impressions of salient features and a general view of somewhat drowsy and dishevelled landscapes, like those of the Hudson in the days of the Dutch. Sleepy Hollow is recalled by the dell on the banks of the James, and Ichabod Crane by the pedagogue Chub. Faithful representations are given of court-house scenes and county politics, of domestic economies and extravagances, of convivial boards and moonlight hunts.

"Horseshoe Robinson" was one of the earliest examples of historical romance written in America. Cooper had set a copy which none of his countrymen had been able to imitate for ten years after the "Spy" was written. But by 1835 Kennedy could send out something better than an imitation in the story which closes with the battle of King's Mountain in the war for independence. This time he placed his romance in South

History and
Romance.

Carolina, and went back as far as Scott did when he began "Waverley ; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since." Historical events of the revolution were getting far enough back to be seen in perspective. Around them were gathering the mists of tradition, sufficient to produce a requisite halo of romance. Even a delightful myth had time to harden into a fact in threescore years, and what statement of contemporaries was ever so definite and well attested that the acumen of later criticism was not able to upset it? This writer was as faithful to the record as a novelist is required to be, but every one knows that there is no such basis for fiction as fact, and that history is the most ductile, malleable, pliable, and flexible of all materials. Therefore, if any statistician approaches our first or second or twentieth writer of historical romances with Pilate's question, What is truth? let him turn to historians in every nation and time, from Herodotus down, to find a satisfactory answer. If he then addresses the great body of readers, he will also discover that the history they remember best was learned in novels, and sometimes that the later the history the nearer the sifted tradition comes to romance. In any case, the story of the independence conflict as told by this author is interesting in its portrayal of a divided public sentiment, and of the vicissitudes of strife in a sparsely inhabited district, ravaged by both armies alternately. With uncommon and conscientious fidelity the writer has filled in the darkest period of the war with delineations of characters in all the variety that is found in a new land in its half-built towns and on its ragged frontier, with the quaint and strong personalities and local eccentricities which belonged to provincial life in the eighteenth century. Added to these are

violent features which partisan war more than any other develops in jealousy, distrust, and hatred between neighbors, friends, and families, with graphic descriptions of bivouac, raid, and battle by one whose familiarity with the ground gives reality and authenticity to every scene. Besides there is emphasized an element of strife in the loyalist or Tory party which is often overlooked or forgotten by those who give but a passing thought to the war for independence. The ascendancy of this party in Carolina gave color to a tale of bitter contention. In it also is drawn from life a portrait of Robinson, as individual and characteristic of its time and place as Cooper's famous hero, Leatherstocking. When in after years the entire story was read to the original he gave the indorsement of an unspoiled critic in the words: "It's all true and right—in its right place—excepting them women, which I disremember." The immediate popularity of the story brought the author abundant praise from the multitude and generous appreciation from Irving and other writers.

Three years later he published "Rob of the Bowl." In this story he came nearer his home, but went farther back in history to the colonial days of the second Lord Baltimore and of the disturbances consequent upon King Charles' order to substitute Protestants for Roman Catholics in every provincial office of trust. Pictures of domestic life alternate with wilder scenes on land and sea in a time when smuggling was not sharply distinguished from legitimate commerce by adventurous skippers. Portraiture of colonial life itself ranged from the governor's mansion to the corsairs' hiding-place, from the nobleman and cavalier to the tailor and the mountebank. In it all is afforded a picture of the times that no chronicle or

annals or more pretentious history has given. It is a reproduction of daily life more than of politics and administration, or of these embellished with the happenings and the characters which swarm over and under the mock-heroic stateliness of colonial grandeur.

As the author had begun his literary career with the anonymous and Salmagundian "Red Book" of local fun-making and satire upon the town, so he closed it with a political satire entitled "Quodlibet, by Solomon Second-thought, Schoolmaster," on the period of the national bank and contemporary issues. But the last book is not like the first, nor any one of his three other volumes like either of its companions. They are as diverse at least as the provinces with which they deal, and while remaining faithful to the features of each are broadly and pleasantly Southern in their general character.

The author's description of Swallow Barn is a picture of

"An aristocratical old edifice which sits, like a brooding hen, on the southern bank of the James River. . . . The main building is more than a century old. It is built with thick brick walls, but one story in height, and surmounted by a double-faced or hipped roof which gives the idea of a ship bottom upwards. Later buildings have been added to this as the wants or ambition of the family have expanded. The hall door is an ancient piece of walnut, which has grown too heavy for its hinges, and by its daily travel has furrowed the floor in a quadrant, over which it has an uneasy journey. An ample court-yard inclosed by a semi-circular paling, extends in front of the whole pile, and is traversed by a gravel road leading from a rather ostentatious iron gate, which is swung between two pillars of brick surmounted by globes of cut stone. . . .

"It is pleasant to see the master of this lordly domain when

he is going to ride to the Court House on business occasions. He then is apt to make his appearance in a coat of blue broadcloth, astonishingly glossy, and with an unusual amount of plaited ruffle strutting through the folds of a Marseilles waistcoat. A worshipful finish is given to this costume by a large straw hat, lined with green silk. There is a magisterial fulness in his garments which betokens condition in the world, and a heavy bunch of seals, suspended by a chain of gold, jingles as he moves, pronouncing him a man of superfluities."

Other details are equally faithful to the old time plantation life and character, of which the following should not be missed:

"These hovels [of the negroes], with their appurtenances, formed an exceedingly picturesque landscape. They were scattered, without order, over the slope of a gentle hill, and many of them embowered under old and majestic trees. The rudeness of their construction rather enhanced the attractiveness of the scene. Some few were built after the fashion of the better sort of cottages; but the more lowly and the most numerous were nothing more than plain log cabins not more than twelve feet square, and not above seven in height. A door swung upon wooden hinges, and a small window of two narrow panes of glass were the only openings in front."

In the midst of these and many more features of Southern life it is interesting to note an opinion on the negro question written in 1829.

"What the negro is finally capable of, in the way of civilization, I am not philosopher enough to determine. In the present stage of his existence he presents himself to my mind as essentially parasitical in his nature. I mean that he is, in his moral constitution, a dependant upon the white race; dependant for guidance and direction even to the procurement of his most indispensable necessities. Apart from this protection he has the helplessness of a child, — without foresight,

without contrivance, without thrift. This may be the due and natural impression which two centuries of servitude have stamped upon the race. But it is not the less an insurmountable impediment to that most cruel of all projects — the direct, broad emancipation of these people; — an act of legislation in comparison with which the revocation of the edict of Nantes would be entitled to be ranked among political benefactions.”

There is much more in this forty-sixth chapter that is worth reading in the light of events that have occurred since it was written.

A more prolific Southern author was William Gilmore Simms of South Carolina. He, too, began life as a lawyer, but left his profession for a more active career as a writer first of verses, after an unsuccessful ^{Simms.} newspaper experience, publishing his “Lyrical and Other Poems” in 1827, and three other volumes in as many years. “Atlantis, a Story of the Sea,” composed on the Massachusetts shore, brought him a generous welcome by the guild of authors in New York, the Harpers issuing this poem and also his first tale, entitled “Martin Faber.” Then followed a time of production marvellous in its industry and fertility. Poems, plays, reviews, essays, biographies and, more numerous still, novels, which flowed from a quill that surpassed the so-called fountain pen of intermittent activity and untrustworthy habits. With whatever he wrote, the reservoir of his invention was regular in supply and apparently inexhaustible. The titles of his volumes mark off the years, and sometimes halves and quarters, for the space of an entire generation. They range from west to east, from south to north, from historic and biographic to highly imaginative creations.

To enumerate them is to indicate the line of his literary pilgrimage with its general forward movement and digressions into by-paths diverting to himself and entertaining to his readers. Moreover, these titles are half characterizations of the books themselves. "The Yemassee," "The Partisan," "Southern Passages and Pictures," "Donna Florida," "The Wigwam and the Cabin," "The Damsel of Darien," and the like, are the author's sign-manual of the bequests that are to follow and of what sort they will be. There will be sunshine in them as in the land where they were written, but alternating with black clouds and terrific storms, loyalty with disloyalty, peace with war, family affection with the feuds of kinsmen, the love of independence with fidelity to colonial traditions, love with duty, filial devotion with a lover's consecration, all intensified by the undeniable influences which belong to race and environment.

To characterize the forty-four volumes that he published in thirty-three years would manifestly be beyond the scope of anything less than a literary biography. On the other hand, it may be said of this voluminous writer, as of many who have written less, that to quote a single passage as an example of his production is as unfair as to bring forward a scale of bark and say, Behold the palmetto tree. Besides, no kind of tree ever had a greater variety of species than this author had diversity of topics, scenes, characters, and, it might be added, grades of work. Amidst so much, however, and in the case of a writer so far removed in time, it will be necessary to call attention to that part of his work which was done best, and which has a value of its own apart from its execution. This is embraced chiefly in his his-

Fertility and
Range.

torical romances of the war for independence. Passing by "Guy Rivers" and the rest of his border stories and the Indian romance of "The Yemassee," a great success, the first of the Revolution tales, "The Partisan," appears the same year with Kennedy's "Horseshoe Robinson," 1835. In this, as in the most of his narratives, true or fictitious, there is an abundance of action, and though the reader is hurried over rough places, there is no danger of falling asleep. He will be treated to sensational scenes of the first magnitude. The play of the drama is the horseplay that belongs to new settlements in fighting trim. A wild and careless freedom, holding the life cheap that belongs to other people, especially to an adversary, is apt to give interest to lovers of tragedy. Color is laid on thick and strong without much delicacy of shading, and a serviceable character once introduced is made the most of. In "Mellichampe" the career of Marion during the period described, the writer asserts, is true to the letter of written history. If the story varies from this, the author is careful to mention in a preface that the divergence is supported by tradition. But he will not dignify this interesting episode with the name of historical romance, because it contains nothing which had a visible effect upon the progress of the Revolution. Still it throws a strong light upon the "times that tried men's souls," and gives that personality and particularity to actors and events which the best histories cannot stop to give in dealing with large issues.

The reader who takes up these romances of our earlier writers must not expect them to resemble the fine-spun creations of the present day. They are not fabrications of the drawing-room and the city street or country village.

They belong to the frontier, the settlement, or the colonial town; to backwoodsmen, patriot troops, and British regulars. As such they have a roughness, or sometimes an inartistic artificiality that is no better, in scenes that would be overdrawn if they were less than true in their violence. They represent the heroic time in all its strength of purpose, with the incidental bitterness that grew out of it between men of the same neighborhood or of the same race who had resorted to arms on a question of loyalty to an oppressive government or of independent home rule. Fourscore years later readers of these romances could understand in the light of a subsequent war how families could be separated and feuds spring up between friendly households and some of the distresses of an earlier time be reproduced.

A few drops from the stream of Simms' romance may give a taste of the water, but they cannot picture the pestilential morass, swarming with reptiles, — the only safe refuge of patriots, — the dark gorge, the copse-wood ambush, and the embattled field through which and more the story runs. Such a drop is the incident of Colonel Walton's rescue when Cornwallis condemned him to be hanged in sight of his home, after his rejection of a proffered commission in the British army. The account is necessarily condensed.

"The procession moved on; the crowd gathered; the tree was before the doomed victim; and the officer in command, riding up, ordered a halt before it, and proceeded to make his arrangements, when the bell sounded: a single stroke and then a pause — as if the hand grew palsied immediately after. That stroke, however, so single, so sudden, drew every eye, aroused all attention, and, coming immediately upon the solemn feelings in-

duced by the approaching scene in the minds of all the spectators, it had the effect of startling, for an instant, all who heard it.

"But when it was repeated with reckless unregulated peal the surprise was complete. The signal had been heard and obeyed by other conspirators. A sudden rush of flame rose from the centre of the village, — another and another in different directions. The crowd broke through the guard clustering around the prisoner and as the officer tried to keep his ranks unbroken he fell beneath the unerring aim of a rifleman in a tree top. The officer next in command coolly enough prepared to do his duty. He closed his men around the prisoner, and when rushing horses were heard trooping from the woods, he boldly faced in the direction of the expected enemy. Singleton was penetrating the square in which his uncle was prisoner. Right and left his heavy sabre descended, biting fatally at every stroke. He seemed double-armed and invulnerable. He ploughed his way through the living wall, with a steel and strength equally irresistible.

"Walton at this moment sprang from the cart and the partisans gathered around him. The guard recoiled, and in the moment Colonel Walton gained the cover of the wood; another found him mounted; and rushing forth, with a wild shout, he gave the enemy an idea of the presence of some fresher enemy, and the dismembered guard fled down the road."

A few other novelists of this primitive period do not deserve the oblivion that is likely to befall them. Dr. Robert M. Bird of Philadelphia is best remembered by the character of Spartacus in the "Gladiator," but "Nick of the Woods," a post-revolution story, endeared him to the youth of his day, and gave him the questionable prominence of being the patriarch of all who manufacture dime novels stuffed with Indians, tomahawks, and scalping knives. Other tales of

Contem-
porary
Novelists.

the border and the sea suggest the fashion started by Cooper, so pleasing to the young American heart that it could not get enough from any single author. A physician of New York, Dr. William S. Mayo, gratified the roving propensity of the Yankee nation by constructing a story out of his observations during a tour through the Barbary States and Spain, in which he weds Jonathan Romer, a thoroughbred Vermonter, to an African princess rejoicing in the mellifluous name of "Kaloolah," furnishing the title to a novel of tropical luxuriance in some respects. To this he added "The Berber; or, The Mountaineer of the Atlas," in similar strain, and "Romance Dust from the Historic Placer," stories founded upon historical incidents. Still other writers of kindred fiction who had their brief day of recognition and patronage have faded and disappeared in the receding distance, to be followed perhaps by some who are still visible by reason of services they render to the study of the history of their times by reproducing in a measure the men and manners of those times — which is the greatest value of all fiction and the surest warrant of its perpetuity.

XXII

EDGAR ALLAN POE

IN 1844 a poem appeared which commended itself to many readers by the mystery and sadness with which it was filled, combined with a certain grotesqueness of fancy and singularity of phrase which caught the popular ear and pleased the imagination. Its title came to be associated so intimately with the author that "Raven" was often the next word after Poe. To this "Annabel Lee," "The Bells," "The Lost Lenore," were sometimes added, and other poems which, like the poet himself, seemed to belong to some outer world far from the practicality of every-day life and from the usual definiteness of American literature in the first third of the century.

This period was just closing when John P. Kennedy did for Poe what Willis had done for Bayard Taylor in bringing a writer of promise before the public.

From the start the young aspirant had met Early Years. with both good and ill fortune. He was born in Boston, but his parents stayed there only to complete a theatrical engagement, wandering off on a southern circuit, and both dying within two years, leaving three children to the compassion of such friends as they might happen to find.

Edgar was fortunate again in being taken up by the wife of a well-to-do tradesman of Richmond, himself generous in his treatment of the precocious lad, who soon became the petted show-piece of the family. This was

his second misfortune. Five years at an English school were followed by six more of preparation for the University of Virginia in a school at home. In both he was active in athletics, a good boxer and swimmer, with but one rival in scholarship, prominent in debates and a versifier of repute, yet without intimate friends and inclined as a spoiled boy to be imperious, capricious, and self-willed. At the university in those days the pursuit of knowledge was relieved by punch and card-playing for money. His good fortune he managed to turn into evil by contracting gambling debts to the amount of about twenty-five hundred dollars, which Mr. Allan, his foster-father, declined to pay, and taking the wayward youth home at the end of the year placed him in his counting-room, from which Edgar broke loose and went to Boston.

He took with him as capital with which to begin life once more in that city at the age of eighteen a bundle of poems which he persuaded another young man to print in a thin volume of forty pages, entitled "Tamerlane and Other Poems, by a Bostonian." At that time it is not probable that his asserted citizenship would have been honored by the ruling caste on the strength of his residence in the city during six months of infancy seventeen years before. His credentials lacked proper indorsement. As for "Tamerlane," it won the author nothing beyond notice of its receipt by the reviews and mention in "Ketell's Specimens of American Poetry." During two years in the army and six months at West Point other poems, including a revision of "Tamerlane," were composed, to be published in 1831 in New York. Among these were "Helen," "The Doomed City," "The Sleeper," "Lenore," and "The Valley of Unrest," not all

First
Ventures.

of them as they now appear, but a long stride ahead of his Boston book. The forthcoming power of his weird imagination and the enchantment of his unique diction begin to show themselves. He might truly say:

“I have reached these lands but newly
From an ultimate dim Thule —
From a wild, weird clime that lieth sublime
Out of space — out of time.”

And he suggests rather than describes —

“Bottomless vales and boundless floods,
And chasms and caves and Titan woods,
With forms that no man can discover
For the dews that drip all over ;
Mountains toppling evermore
Into seas without a shore —
Seas that restlessly aspire,
Surging unto skies of fire —
Lakes that endlessly outspread
Their lone waters — lone and dead.”

This is the dreamland, ghoulish and demon-peopled, where his sad eye wanders, seeing shapes and visions which come only to one who is afflicted at times with intellectual delirium tremens. Then, again, he would catch glimpses of seraphic splendor and soar to the zenith in his song of “Israfel”:

“In heaven a spirit doth dwell
Whose heart strings are a lute ;
None sings so wildly well
As the angel Israfel,
And the giddy stars (so legends tell),
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
Of his voice, all mute.”

Then he feels the dragging of the earthly ball and chain, and descends to this:

"If I could dwell
 Where Israfael
 Hath dwelt, and he where I,
 He might not sing so wildly well
 A mortal melody,
 While a bolder note than this might swell
 From my lyre within the sky."

The verse is the type of the poet himself, in whom aspiration was always contending with limitation in bitter strife, like Ormuzd and Ahriman, the good angel and the bad of the Persian myth. And sometimes it must have seemed to him like the single-handed warfare of Michael the archangel against the dragon and his angels, as suggested in the verses on "Silence":

"There are some qualities — some incorporate things,
 That have a double life, which thus is made
 A type of that twin entity which springs
 From matter and light, evinced in solid and shade.
 There is a twofold *Silence* — sea and shore —
 Body and soul. One dwells in lonely places
 Newly with grass o'ergrown; some solemn graces,
 Some human memories and tearful lore,
 Render him terrorless: his name's 'No More.'
 He is corporate Silence: dread him not!
 No power hath he of evil in himself;
 But should some urgent fate (untimely lot)!
 Bring thee to meet his shadow (nameless elf
 That haunteth the lone regions where hath trod
 No foot of man), commend thyself to God!"

Poe's best verse is too familiar to need more than the mention already made of it. Two short poems, however, should be added as an expression of what was best in him — loyalty to home virtues. The first is the antithesis of "Annabel Lee":

" I dwelt alone
In a world of moan

And my soul was a stagnant tide,
Till the fair and gentle Eulalie became my blushing bride —
Till the yellow-haired young Eulalie became my smiling bride.

" Ah, less — less bright
The stars of night
Than the eyes of the radiant girl !
And never a flake
That the vapor can make

With the moon-tints of purple and pearl
Can vie with the modest Eulalie's most unregarded curl
Can compare with the bright-eyed Eulalie's most humble and
careless curl.

" Now Doubt — now Pain
Come never again,
For her soul gives me sigh for sigh
And all the day long
Shines bright and strong,

Astarte within the sky,
While ever to her dear Eulalie upturns her matron eye —
While ever to her young Eulalie upturns her violet eye."

And all mothers-in-law should have a kindly thought
for the man who wrote, " To my Mother ":

" Because I feel that, in the Heaven above,
The angels whispering to one another,
Can find, among their burning terms of love,
None so devotional as that of ' Mother,'
Therefore by that dear name I long have called you —
You who are more than mother unto me,
And fill my heart of hearts, where Death installed you,
In setting my Virginia's spirit free.
My mother — my own mother who died early,
Was but the mother of myself; but you
Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,
And thus are dearer than the mother I knew
By that infinity with which my wife
Was dearer to my soul than its soul-life."

The temptation will always arise to join the party of accusers or of apologists so soon as the element of his personal life mingles with the literature which an author has created. How far the balance will list to one side or the other depends in such a case as this upon belief in heredity on the one hand, and on the other upon confidence in the ability of the inheritor of evil bent and bias to straighten the grain as he grows up and lives on. If, however, a moral weakness to resist be added to strong appetite in the inheritance, it would seem that the child should have large allowances made for an almost inevitable wreck. Perhaps in Poe's instance the lapses into inebriety were not so culpable as the seeming perversity with which he threw away those opportunities and advantages which would have gone far to retrieve a false start in life, for which he was no more responsible than for the good fortune of being born in Boston. Indeed throughout his checkered career he displayed remarkable facility for snubbing main chances. If he discovered opportunity sometimes passing in disguise, he often lacked instant decision to seize it, or at least to hold it until it took him to another. Judicious training in boyhood might have taken some puzzling curves out of him. Nevertheless he contrived to live by his pen for seventeen years. It is the work of that period more than his manner of life that is of present concern.

His successes began in Baltimore with winning a prize of one hundred dollars offered by a weekly paper for the best prose tale. This was accompanied by a poem which would have taken another prize if two premiums had been allowed to go to one author. The recommendation of the committee of award that he should

Inheritances.

Literary
Career.

print such stories as he had on hand was a compensation, and gave him an encouraging start with the paper above mentioned. Magazine editorship soon followed, with an apprenticeship in story-writing, in which his predilection for the gruesome and the mysterious and the melodramatic is revealed in crude colors.

Kennedy, who stood literary sponsor for him, wrote: "This young fellow is highly imaginative and a little given to the terrific," but his letter of recommendation helped Poe to secure a place as assistant editor of the "Southern Literary Messenger," published at Richmond. This in turn furnished a medium for introducing to the public his theory of poetry and fresh examples of it, and also of his prose-writing. Any supposition that his compositions were gloomy or mystical because he himself was in a chronic state of depression is corrected by his own statement that pleasure is the object of verse, and that the pleasure must be subtle and its undertone melancholy as the resultant chord of all human experiences.

His first venture in journalism was getting to be fairly prosperous and full of promise for the future when one or another of his evil genii interrupted his devotion to it, and he threw away a most important opportunity in that it was his first one. Had he kept on with this enterprise as he began, everything in the way of the periodical literature of the time would have been open to him. Instead, he abandoned the "Messenger" and Richmond for Philadelphia and irregular contributions to this paper and that. "Ligeia," "The Haunted Palace," "The Fall of the House of Usher," some "Literary Small Talk" and book notices, with a text-book on Conchology, belong to this period. By this time, however, his stories

Prose
Tales.

amounted to twenty-five in number, and were published as his first instalment of prose. The same characteristics are prominent as in his verse, and even more pronounced. He deals with the realm of the improbable bordering on the impossible. To this he sometimes gives the appearance of likelihood by attempts to account for his invented occurrences on scientific principles. He also employs a direct and explicit style, in itself carrying an impression of truth. But it is only to give reality to shadows and the similitude of fact to that which in the nature of things could not be. His fiction is so much stranger than truth that the marvellous invention is more surprising than if the story had been true; just as an artistic liar's mendacity is half admired in the splendor of his achievement in falsehood. Yet the frequent charge that he invented marvels in order to explain them is not always a fair supposition, since he delighted in unravelling actual complications. The pains he took to decipher cryptograms which were sent him in reply to his statement that none were so abstruse that they could not be read, indicates the singular bent of his mind toward the occult. As in his verse, the titles of his prose tales are full of dark suggestion and the fascination that goes with it. "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," "Mesmeric Revelation," "The Black Cat," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Premature Burial," "The Masque of the Red Death," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Roget" — all these and others like them are suggestive of enigmas, disasters, and crimes. They are dark-complexioned themes, shadowy with twilight forms gliding on unholy errands. They give glimpses of an outer limbo where the inhabitants of

another world hover on the borders of this with fell intent or sad reminiscence.

The stories themselves fulfil the promise of their titles. They reek with horrors. Delusions that prove fatal, remorse that follows involuntary crime, tombs that are prisons, vaults for those who Their Ghoul-
ish Character. cannot die, low-hanging clouds, starless gloom, trees swaying in windless air, cold, slimy walls, vermin-haunted dungeons, despair and death — these are the lurid points in a symphony of black and red. Sometimes, as in "The Domain of Arnheim," there is lavished a profusion of oriental color — melodies, odors, shrubberies, birds, flowers, silver streams, pinnacles, and minarets flashing in red sunlight, the phantom architecture of fairies. But oftener the tone of the picture is like this:

"From that chamber and from that mansion I fled aghast. The storm was still abroad in all its wrath as I found myself crossing the old causeway. Suddenly there shot along the path a wild light. The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon. There came a fierce breath of the whirlwind; my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder; there was a long, tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters, and the deep and dark tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the House of Usher."

And this:

"It was then, however, that Prince Prospero, maddening with rage and the shame of his own momentary cowardice, rushed hurriedly through the six chambers, while none followed him on account of a deadly terror that had seized upon all. He bore aloft a drawn dagger, and had approached, in rapid impetuosity, to within three or four feet of the retreating figure, when the latter, having attained the extremity of the velvet

apartment, turned suddenly and confronted his pursuer. There was a sharp cry — and the dagger dropped gleaming upon the sable carpet, upon which, instantly afterwards, fell prostrate in death the Prince Prospero. Then summoning the wild courage of despair, a throng of revellers at once threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer, whose tall figure stood erect and motionless within the shadow of the ebony clock, gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave ceremonies and corpse-like mask which they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form.

“And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripod expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.”

The same might be said of the most of Poe's “Tales.”

Poe has had numerous imitators, especially in the line of the detective story, who have shown at least how dangerous it is to walk the narrow way which he chose to tread, keeping himself by careful steps from toppling over into the depths of ludicrous bathos. Such followers have not been born to be mystics, alchemists, and jugglers in the black art like Poe, in whose mind, as in the seven chambers of his Prospero's castellated abbey, there stalked a multitude of weird dreams in the carnival of the “Red Death.” But if one wishes now and then to get far out of the highways of literature into the land which lies next to the unseen and the unknown, whither only one or two in a century have gone and returned with even a plausible account of what they have seen, then this gloomy, wayward, but second-sighted spirit will be the most satisfactory guide.

No man has been so diversely understood, and therefore abused and lauded by turns. Almost everything has been charged upon him except immorality and unkindness to his family. Possibly if his biography had never been written, especially by Rufus Griswold, and his works published without comment, they would now be rated more nearly for what they are worth. Above all, if his slashing criticisms of contemporaries had never been printed, the opinion of him which his fellow authors naturally formed would have been more just, for it was as a critic that he was most notorious in his time. In the scarcity of home-born judges, and in the hatred of foreign censorship upon the early writers of the century, Poe himself saw that there was a vacancy to be filled and believed that he was the man to fill it. Aside from a certain bitterness acquired with what he was pleased to consider his hard luck in life, his teachers in criticism were of the British swashbuckler school of a hundred years ago, of whom only an occasional imitator can be found at the present day. But in Poe's time the later and better mode had not appeared. Accordingly he set up one and put down another, following his own likes and dislikes. Bryant was declared to be a genius, Longfellow without originality. His soul revolts at any depreciation of Bayard Taylor's poems, but he says that Cooper is remarkably inaccurate as a general rule. Commending Hawthorne in essentials, he thinks that his "monotone" will deprive him of popular appreciation, and that William Ellery Channing has been inoculated with virus from Tennyson and Carlyle. Those sometime neighbors of his, the "Literati of New York," some of them his benefactors, are served freely with his opinions about themselves. Willis,

As a Critic.

who did him many good turns, is told that, whatever may be thought about his talents, he has made a good deal of noise in the world; that he has failed as an essayist, and has by no means the readiness which the editing of a newspaper demands, and that vacillation is the leading trait of his character — as, the critic ought to have added, ingratitude is of mine. If he could say these things of one who had found a place for him in the days when he was wandering from magazine to journal and from newspaper offices to the street, what might not be expected to fall on those who had placed him under no obligations to themselves? That depended upon his caprice, and this in turn upon his spirits, and these again upon circumstances over which he is said to have had no control, and with which an outline of his literary career has little to do, if the final product was not affected. It is this sum of his work in poems, stories and criticism, that has a value of its own for those who will appropriate it without too much consideration of what one and another assert for or against one of the ablest and most original of American authors. It is time to estimate him by his works alone.

In the volume which contains his critiques it is interesting to note the list of authors who were deemed worthy of his notice, and how few of them are now among the number with which a well-read person is expected to be familiar. After giving his opinion of a few English writers, including Mrs. Browning, Macaulay, and Dickens, he soon takes up Bryant, Hawthorne, and Bayard Taylor, but in their company are Rufus Dawes, William Lord, Henry B. Hirst, Robert Walsh, and others of equal promise in their day. Not far from Lowell and Longfellow are the names of Margaret

The Value of
Contemporary
Fame.

Fuller, Lucretia Davidson, William Wallace, Estelle Anna Lewis, and Francis Osgood. Then the "Literati of New York" who were considered as sufficiently eminent to deserve his strictures — what other chance of future celebrity did some of them have? George Bush, Ralph Hoyt, Freman Hunt, Anna Cora Mowatt, Laughton Osborn, Ann S. Stephens, Richard A. Locke and a dozen and a half more. Of them all Willis, Halleck, and Margaret Fuller are the best known after threescore years. It is a comment on the value of contemporary criticism, at least by a single critic, that Poe had no sure word of prophecy for the survivors of a group which has passed into oblivion. Hawthorne did not much outshine Amelia Welby, nor Longfellow Stella Lewis in Poe's pages, although his stars were apt to be of the feminine gender. And yet Poe was nothing if not critical, and was a leader in this branch of literature, in spite of his assertion that Mr. William A. Jones "is our most analytic, if not our best critic (Mr. Whipple, perhaps, excepted)." And of these two the last lingered longest. A question which suggests two answers is, whether the men and women who in their lifetime enjoyed the praise of contemporaries did not receive as great a portion of comfort as those who were appreciated no more then, but are now recognized as preëminent. Was George P. Morris less fortunate than Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Christopher Pease Cranch than Lowell, and Thomas Dunn English than Longfellow? If not, let the hundred-thousand edition writers of to-day make hay while the sun shines, and before night and oblivion come, and posterity with its unforeseen standards of measurement. How is it, Milton? Have you ever received more than the pittance of five pounds for "Paradise Lost"? And,

Shakespeare, was the competence you gained in London with some applause and some hisses all the comfort you have got out of manuscripts now missing? And Spenser and Chaucer, Dante, Virgil, and Homer, what is the value to you of appreciation for generations? Does it offset the abuse and neglect some of you received in your lifetime?

In fine, are you at all conscious, or all unconscious, of the praise of posterity and of your literary immortality?

XXIII

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

It has been seen that literary activity centred in New York during the first third of the century, as it had prevailed in Philadelphia so long as this city was the metropolis of the land and capital of the new nation. Revolt in New England. Meanwhile there was less enterprise among New England writers. There was ability enough, as there had always been, but the well-worn channels in which it had run were getting dry. Theological science is vast enough to occupy the human mind forever, but if it is narrowed to a few points like predestination and election it may become so deep that the perseverance of the saints cannot fathom its mysteries. After one hundred and seventy-five years of discussion there was little new to be said, and little interest or literature in the ceaseless repetition of the old arguments. Nothing but chaff and dust came of prolonged thrashing of the old straw.

That there was little else to discuss was due to the inhospitality of New England toward outer-world books. Elizabethan and Queen Anne writers were as the sons of Belial in the eyes of those who sat in the receipt of custom, and no large invoices of frivolous dramas or unsanctified essays or unorthodox sermons were landed in Salem or Boston previous to the adoption of the Constitution and

the beginning of our national life. Therefore the sceptre departed from this Israel and went southward to a more hospitable region, and under its patronage an early harvest of literature followed, such as it was.

At last, however, a revolt took place in Massachusetts, succeeding one which had sprung up in England long before, against a narrow and exclusive ecclesiasticism. Here it was helped on by a movement derived from a larger one abroad, consequent upon a time of general unrest and upheaval. German idealism, French communism, and English radicalism began to be heard of, and the alert New Englander became uneasy. The independent spirit which he had inherited from Pilgrim and Puritan had found its legitimate result in civil liberty and freedom from monarchy; why should he not break with the ecclesiastical tyranny of the standing order, and with its practical prohibition of foreign literature? The answer came to each part of this question almost simultaneously. The Unitarian movement represented the reaction from the discipline and the bondage of a narrow system of divinity, and a new spirit in letters was a secondary and legitimate result.

Before observing the effect of this reaction upon leaders in the new movement toward a larger and freer literature

Whittier's
Antecedents
and
Education.

some attention should be paid to a New Englander whose antecedents did not bind him to the hard and fast traditions of the elders. John Greenleaf Whittier as a Quaker had about as much in common with the Puritan as a Samaritan with a Jew. He believed in essential righteousness, but not in the Hebrew criminal code for Englishmen's sons and daughters. Consequently he had nothing to revolt against which his

forefathers had not been made to hate by the persecutions from the dominant class in former generations. The sense of narrow dogmatism which gradually dawned upon the more liberally inclined of the standing order was an old story to the descendants of Friends who had been hauled and whipped from town to town at the tail of a cart as the mildest of penalties for aspiring to the exclusive right of first settlers to worship God according to their conscience. He had no break to effect with the prevailing doctrinal sentiment. His ancestors were born opposing it and fared accordingly. And when at last the early springtime of a new literature came, the first bluebird note of it on the chilly eastern coast was the song of the Quaker poet in the valley of the Merrimac. It was not the outcry of a restless spirit struggling with convictions inbred from generation to generation, but a simple strain of melody, such as had been heard before at intervals from Theocritus to Burns. The Essex county boy, far from neighbors, but close to nature had been born with the rhyming gift, and with that other faculty which creates the poetry that is more than verse. The rhyme came first, to be sure, and with it the aspiration for something better than the dull round of farm life, in his instance not to be gratified in the usual advantages of prolonged academic education. His was rather the schooling of public libraries, the printing office, and later of the editorial chair—the place where so many of our early authors were obliged to earn the living which made their lighter labors possible.

Whittier, however, was not so entirely a poet that he could not do yeoman service on a newspaper. His practical interest in public affairs and politics was serviceable

to his party and to himself, placing him in the legislature of his native state and winning him successive positions of influence in one editorial office after another. Other serial publications than his own were open to his verse, and literary fame began to reward his early efforts and betoken better things to come.

The production of this newspaper period of his poetical composition was what might be expected from a farm-bred young man of northeastern Massachusetts. In common with most American writers of that generation he believed that there was a wealth of Indian tradition which might be turned into the riches of American verse. In the first complete collection of his poems Whittier placed the "Bridal of Pennacook" at the beginning, as if typifying his earliest poetic ambition, finding the legend on the banks of his own Merrimac, thus indicating that he would not go far afield for themes. Like Scott, and Irving afterward, he introduces the old-fashioned "chronicle of border wars" to give an air of credibility to a legend which might as well have been gathered from the landlord of the mountain inn as from the fourth book in his representative library of "Bunyan, Watts, and a file of almanacs." But this was a custom of the time. The apostrophe to the river which flowed unbridged and unobstructed from mountain to sea is in the truer manner of a dweller on its banks. So also is the description of lodge and wigwam, decorated with spoils of chase and war and of the chief's magic skill and the daughter's woodland freedom and love; of the wedding feast to the river sagamores and the sachems from the crystal hills to the far southeast. The story of Indian pride, always greater than Indian love, carries with it the

Early
Efforts.

gloom which belongs to the forest pagan even in his days of peace. And in his hour of treachery and blood "Mogg Magone" shows how dark was the strife and dire the revenge and bitter the hate between the savage and the encroaching alien.

"He laughs at his jest. Hush — what is there? —
The sleeping Indian is striving to rise,
With his knife in his hand, and glaring eyes! —
'Wagh! — Mogg will have the pale-face's hair,
For his knife is sharp and his fingers can help
The hair to pull and the skin to peel —
Let him cry like a woman and twist like an eel,
The great Captain Scamman must lose his scalp!
And Ruth when she sees it shall dance with Mogg.'
His eyes are fixed — but his lips draw in —
With a low, hoarse chuckle, and fiendish grin —
And he sinks again, like a senseless dog.

"Ruth starts erect — with bloodshot eye,
And lips drawn tight across her teeth,
Showing their locked embrace beneath,
In the red fire-light: — 'Mogg must die!
Give me the knife!' — The outlaw turns,
Shuddering in heart and limb, away —
But, fitfully there, the hearth-fire burns,
And he sees on the wall strange shadows play,
A lifted arm, a tremulous blade,
Are dimly pictured in light and shade,
Plunging down in the darkness. Hark, that cry!
Again — and again — he sees it fall —
That shadowy arm down the lighted wall!
He hears quick footsteps — a shape flits by —
The door on its rusted hinges creaks: —
'Ruth — daughter Ruth!' the outlaw shrieks
But no sound comes back — he is standing alone
By the mangled corse of Mogg Magone!"

So the "Legendary Poems" hint of a remote time when the Norseman touched upon this dreary coast and sailed

away, and of a later age when Puritan Endicott offered a Quaker maiden to any sea captain who would take her to Barbados to sell for "higher price than Indian girl or Moor." Then the poet turns to aboriginal story "around Sebago's lonely lake" or in more distant Acadia, where French and English contend for dominion, or to nearer Pentucket and the midnight raid of painted savages, or the daylight swoop of priest and sheriff upon Goodman Macey's cottage for the Quaker who had taken refuge from the coming storm. In all this the past of the country with which the poet was familiar is recalled and clothed with its traditions and its history. Not as prosy chronicler and annalist had depicted it for Englishmen at home or for posterity, but as fact and fancy were blended in the mind of the first New Englander who was lifted above the hard, restrained life of the eastern seaboard to discover and use the scant material for poetry which lay in its valleys and on its hillsides. This Whittier saw and made the most of it. To the citizen of the middle or southern states it seemed unfertile and poor as the soil in Essex pastures, but to the youths who ranged over them and are now young in memory only, the verse of their native poet will always have the flavor of the sea, the river, and the mountains, as Bryant's will have of the woods and hills of Hampshire.

This to the Merrimac — the river that flows through the region of his early song:

"Stream of my fathers ! sweetly still
The sunset rays thy valley fill ;
Poured slantwise down the long defile,
Wave, wood and spire beneath them smile.

The green hill in its belt of gold,
And following down its wavy line,
Its sparkling waters blend with thine.
There 's not a tree upon thy side,
Nor rock, which thy returning tide
As yet hath left abrupt and stark
Above thy evening water mark ;
No calm cove with its rocky hem,
No isle whose emerald swells begem
Thy broad smooth current ; not a sail
Bowed to the freshening ocean-gale ;
No small boat with its busy oars,
Nor gray wall sloping to thy shores ;
No farm house with its maple shade,
Or rigid poplar colonnade,
But lies distinct and full in sight,
Beneath this gush of sunset light."

This legendary poetry and the ambition to develop whatever possibilities lay beneath a barren surface both received a check in the poet's manifest call to enlist in the anti-slavery movement which was starting in 1833. Colonization in Liberia was its first outcome, with Henry Clay as president of the society having the enterprise in charge. But as this scheme provided for freedmen only, it appeared to meet the rising issue but partially. The pamphlet which Whittier wrote is the prose statement of his views, but "Randolph of Roanoke" was the beginning of his service in verse to the cause he had undertaken to champion, at the cost of everything to which he had aspired. From this time his pen was busy in writing "Voices of Freedom." The pecuniary unprofitableness of these was counterbalanced by the growing response they elicited from the North. Their titles in the next four years include "Toussaint L'Ouverture," "The Yankee Girl," "The Slave Mother's

Lament," "Our Fellow Countrymen in Chains," "The Hunters of Men," "Song of the Free" and several not found among his collected poems. In them all the purpose of the poet is clear and strong, even if the performance is not always artistic. It was not a time when a reformer like Whittier could dally with art. A great battle was to be fought, and the devoted soldier could not always stop to burnish his weapons. It was enough for him if his shots raised a cheer: it was much the same to him if they called forth a howl of rage. Their very roughness made some of his verses appeal to the boys in blue as more correct measures and exact rhymes did not.

In particular this was true of his verses in the war period. It matters not if the most popular of them is founded upon a newspaper report of doubtful
War-Songs. authenticity, or that its movement is sometimes forward and back, marching and halting like Stonewall's troops. It has in it the spirit of reverence for the country's flag in spite of temporary disloyalty, and also of honor for Barbara Frietchie's defiant patriotism. The poetic idea is there, and a ruling sentiment of the nation in sufficient abundance to furnish a drama to full houses night after night. Generation after generation of children will recite it as they run "Old Glory" up the flag-staff, and learn the lessons of loyalty to it in the patriotic literature of their country. Early in the war the note of forbearance and patience is apparent, as in his "Word for the Hour," and "The Watchers;" faith is strong in "Astraea," and hope in "Mithridates," and charity in the "Anniversary Poem." But in them all is the purpose to help on the triumph of consistency in a nation professing to be free and the home of the world's

oppressed. So earnest was he in these contributions of his to the strife that the thought was of more account than the word, and the meaning of his own verse than the form of it. The end of it all is declared in the lines to the flag at the capitol:

"I knew that truth would crush the lie, —
Somehow, sometime the end would be;
Yet scarcely dared I hope to see
The triumph with my mortal eye.

"But now I see it! In the sun
A free flag floats from yonder dome,
And at the nation's hearth and home
The justice long delayed is done.

"Not as we hoped, in calm of prayer,
The message of deliverance comes,
But heralded by roll of drums
On waves of battle-troubled air! —

"Not as we hoped; — but what are we?
Above our broken dreams and plans
God lays, with wiser hand than man's
The corner-stones of liberty."

The war over and the strain past, the poet turned toward the fields and memories of youth with greater leisure to do more finished work. He could now write without the stress of agitating reform upon him those poems in which the rural heart rejoices in country or city. Peace had not been six months declared when he began to write what he called "Snow-Bound: A Winter Idyl; A Homely Picture of Old New England Homes." Winter on the Massachusetts coast has had a few apologists and countless maligners; but none has more lovingly portrayed its warm side or more faithfully exhibited its bleak side,

Poems of the
Countryside.

giving to this also something of the softness and warmth of a snowdrift to a roystering, red-cheeked boy and his frolicsome dog. Outside it is the carnival of the storm; within it is the picture of comfort and safety beneath the chill and the depth of overwhelming snows. It is the war song of the New England farmer in conflict with his winter, with a strain of joy through it all and of victory at the end. Only a farmer's boy could have known what to write, and a true poet only could have set the snow scene in such verse.

Side by side with "Snow-Bound" should always be placed the summer marine view of "The Tent on the Beach." Good as he modestly thought the first, he hoped to make the second still better. The one brought him ten thousand dollars; the other was sold at the rate of a thousand copies a day. His poetic ambition was more than gratified, and prosperity crowned his later years. But he had known the dull and heavy dreariness of farm life, which does not always give strength to those who, like the Libyan giant, keep in contact with the earth. In his prelude to the poem "Among the Hills" he brings out the real side of farming in contrast to what idealism it may have in the poem itself, which he at first intended to make a companion idyl to "Snow-Bound":

" — I know

Too well the picture has another side, —
How wearily the grind of toil goes on
Where love is wanting, how the eye and ear
And heart are starved amidst the plentitude
Of nature, and how hard and colorless
Is life without an atmosphere. I look
Across the lapse of half a century,
And call to mind old homesteads, where no flower
Told that spring had come, but evil weeds,

Nightshade and rough-leaved burdock in the place
Of the sweet doorway greeting of the rose
And honeysuckle, where house walls seemed
Blistering in the sun, without a tree or vine
To cast the tremulous shadow of its leaves
Across the curtainless windows, from whose panes
Fluttered the signal rags of shiftlessness.

“ And in sad keeping with all things about them,
Shrill, querulous women, sour and sullen men,
Untidy, loveless, old before their time,
With scarce a human interest save their own
Monotonous round of small economies,
Or the poor scandal of the neighborhood.

“ Church goers, fearful of the unseen Powers,
But grumbling over pulpit-tax and pew-rent,
Saving, as shrewd economists, their souls
And winter pork with the least possible outlay
Of salt and sanctity ; in daily life
Showing as little comprehension
Of Christian charity and duty,
As if the Sermon on the Mount had been
Outdated like a last year's almanac.

“ Not such should be the homesteads of a land
Where whoso wisely wills and acts may dwell
As king and lawgiver, in broad-acred state
With beauty, art, taste, culture, books, to make
His hour of leisure richer than a life
Of fourscore to the barons of old time.”

Whichever aspect of country life the poet delineates he will always find readers who have seen or heard enough about it to recognize the fidelity of his description, and to be pleased with what they could not have so truly done themselves. Consequently, he is the country people's poet more than any other, and the song-maker of all who love the country from one month to twelve, according to time and opportunity or even necessity. Fortunately, he

wrote enough to last days and weeks, since poetry should be read in limited quantities to be best appreciated. The variety of his themes, and their treatment also, prevent the weariness of monotony; mediocre performance sometimes affording the relief of change from the greater strain and the surpassing excellence of his best achievement. But no one can read his poems in course or at random without knowing that early and late he was the tuneful voice of his province recalling its forest legends, uttering its protests for righteousness, and finally chanting its anthems of the sea and the storm, ending in the cadences of evening as his sun went down in peace, and with these words from "The Shadow and the Light":

"Shine on us with the light which glowed
Upon the trance-bound shepherd's way,
Who saw the darkness overflowed
And drowned by tides of everlasting day."

The man will always be remembered as even greater than his work, good and effective as that was in the cause of truth and humanity. Much that might be said of his sterling virtues and his true poetry may best be summed up in a stanza of Holmes's tribute to his companion gone:

"Best loved and saintliest of our singing train,
Earth's noblest tributes to thy name belong,
A lifelong record closed without a stain,
A blameless memory shrined in deathless song."

XXIV

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

THE poets mentioned in previous chapters who achieved distinction accomplished this by dealing with home topics and scenes. Even Poe's "No Man's Land" was within the jurisdiction of the United States, although not put down on its maps or charts.

Domestic and
Foreign
Sources of
Poetry.

Bryant's song began in the western counties of Massachusetts, Whittier's on the Bay. The Green river ran through the verses of the first, the Merrimac through those of the other, and the New England atmosphere pervades both. In both was the development of domestic themes, in which the new country was supposed to be so rich that the poet and the novelist need never look elsewhere for raw material. By and by the suspicion arose that it was too raw. The utmost patriotism became tired of calling the goose a swan and the crow a raven and the whippoorwill a nightingale. The very insistence in doing this was a tribute to the foreign bird in each instance, and when popular taste began to get beyond juvenility and its own door yard it looked over the hills and across the sea toward the wealth of tradition and history out of which most of the world's poetry is coined.

The man to meet this return of instinctive feeling, and to inspire it also, was a Portland graduate of Bowdoin College, a little farther down east. Yet his antecedents

were of the Bay, the maternal line running back to John Alden and Priscilla at Plymouth, his father and grandfather being graduates of Harvard. If the poet missed anything in not following the family precedents in education, he doubtless made it up as professor in the university for seventeen years, to which he was called five years after leaving his alma mater, where he had served an apprenticeship for two years in a similar capacity.

But his first post-collegiate study was in the greater schools of Europe, whither he went to prepare himself for the chair of modern languages at Bowdoin. Three years of residence and travel overflowed in "Outre-Mer," the first of his books not a translation. The title itself was significant of his mission to his countrymen. From beyond the sea he was to bring them the treasures of old world story and song, but first he would tell them how the foreign towns and cities, mountains and rivers, castles and abbeys, towers and spires looked to an American youth whose head was already well stocked with their lore and legends. Irving's example and "Sketch Book" were before him, as he frankly confesses at Göttingen in 1829: "I am writing a kind of 'Sketch Book' of scenes in France, Spain, and Italy." The "Conquest of Granada" and the "Alhambra" are recalled as one reads:

"The burnished armor of the Cid stands in the archives of the royal museum at Madrid, and there, too, is seen the armor of Ferdinand and Isabel, of Guzman the Good and Gonzalo de Cordova; but what hand shall now wield the sword of Campeador or lift up the banner of Leon and Castile? The ruins of Christian castle and Moorish alcazar still look forth from the hills of Spain; but where is the spirit of freedom that once fired the children of the Goth? Shall it never beat high again in the

hearts of their degenerate sons? Shall the descendants of Pelayo bow forever beneath an iron yoke, like cattle whose despair is dumb?"

France suggests many observations, but in his chapter on the Trouvères and the literature of song in the olden time the youthful poet is revelling in the sources whence he will draw both material and inspiration in the years to come. Rome and the Italian cities roused the same spirit of reflection upon their stratified history in 1827 as they will this year and always, but the story of it was fresher to Americans three-quarters of a century ago than it is to-day. Comparatively few of his countrymen had made the Continental pilgrimage, and the poet felt himself commissioned to bring out of Europe all that he could carry to America. It is significant of his comprehensive purpose to introduce a wider culture for his fellow citizens that a translation of a French grammar was the first fruit of his stay abroad, to be followed by a version of a Spanish play. And then came the journal of his tour in the book already mentioned, published in parts in 1833-1834 and in two volumes the following year. "Hyperion" appeared five years later, a romance version of his wanderings, gathering up the fancies which do not so well adjust themselves to a notebook as to a love story, especially if the principal characters be the author himself and his future wife. It is the harvest of travel in Germany and Switzerland, as "Outre-Mer" had been of loiterings along the Mediterranean shore. Rhine legends and Alpine scenery alternate with songs of river and mountain, vintage time and university hall, interspersed with bits of philosophy, criticism, biography, and history. The chapter on Goethe, but just dead, must have turned students toward the "many-sided master mind of

Germany," and have given a fresh impulse to studies in a literature which a few American scholars like Bancroft and Everett were opening to their countrymen.

"‘Your English critics may rail as they list,’ said the Baron, ‘but after all, Goethe was a magnificent old fellow. Only think of his life; his youth of passion, alternately aspiring and desponding, stormy, impetuous, headlong; — his romantic manhood, in which passion assumes the form of strength; assiduous, careful, toiling, without haste, without rest; — and his sublime old age, — the age of serene and classic repose, where he stands like Atlas, as Claudian has painted him in the Battle of the Giants, holding the world aloft upon his head, the ocean-streams hard frozen in his hoary locks.’

"‘A good illustration of what the world calls his indifferentism.’

"‘And do you know I rather like this indifferentism? Did you never have the misfortune to live in a community, where a difficulty in a parish seemed to announce the end of the world? or to know one of the benefactors of the human race in the very “storm and pressure” period of his indiscreet enthusiasm? If you have, I think you will see something beautiful in the calm and dignified attitude which the old philosopher assumes.’

"‘It is a pity that his admirers had not a little of this philosophic coolness. It amuses me to read the various epithets which they apply to him.’

"‘His enemies rush to the other extreme, and hurl at him the fierce names of Old Humbug! and Old Heathen!’

"‘Well, call him what you please; I maintain, that, with all his errors and shortcomings, he was a glorious specimen of a man.’

"‘He certainly was. Did it ever occur to you that he was in some points like Ben Franklin, — a kind of rhymed Ben Franklin? The practical tendency of his mind was the same; his benignant, philosophic spirit was the same; and a vast number of his little poetic maxims and soothsayings seem nothing more than the worldly wisdom of Poor Richard, versified.’

"‘What most offends me is, that now every German jackass must have a kick at the dead lion.’”

Longfellow's first volume of poems was published in the same year, 1839. He called it "Voices of the Night," perhaps with a young man's paradoxical inclination toward sombre reflection. Possibly it was a trace of the Puritan gloom which delighted in the shadows of Dr. Young's "Night Thoughts," — for the Cambridge poet was not one to obtrude a personal sorrow into his verse at the age of thirty-two. Whatever was the reason for the title, the "Hymn to Night" and the "Midnight Mass of the Dying Year" and the "Light of Stars" are not songs of the day. Even the "Beleaguered City," with its moral of the dawn, is chilly and damp with spectral mists, put to flight not by the rising sun, but the cathedral bell. He is not yet free from the solemnity of the "Earlier Poems" of fifteen years before, when Bryant's sober and solemn mood had acknowledged attraction for him as he wrote "Autumn" and the "Woods in Winter."

With "Ballads and Other Poems," published in 1841, a new spirit is apparent. "The Skeleton in Armor" bristles with the spears of Viking ancestors, and is linked to ages which were prehistoric on the American coast. In this, as in his translation of "Fridthof's Saga" and "Study of Anglo-Saxon," he directed contemporaries to a Scandinavian mythology which rivals that of southern Europe and the ancients, and has special interest for the descendants of the Norsemen. Incidentally he showed that his culture was wide as the literature of Europe could make it. This he was glad to introduce to the children of those who had pushed the dominion of the Gothic race across the Atlantic. He called their attention to the rude and strong elements of a primitive faith and a primeval verse, to myth and edda, saga and song of scald.

His inherited love of the sea, fostered by a boyhood on the Maine coast, appears here and there in poems like

New and Old-
World
Poems.

"The Wreck of the Hesperus" on the reef of Norman's Woe, "The Bird and the Ship," "The Building of the Ship," "Sir Humphrey Gilbert," "The Lighthouse," and the rest of the group "By the Seaside." Still it is apparent that he did not delight in storm and wreck and the tragedies of the ocean; neither in battle and war nor any kind of strife. He was a poet of peace and of the home virtues and the heart's affections. The patient endeavor of the "Psalm of Life," the youthful aspiration of "Excelsior," the resignation of the "Rainy Day," the immortal hope of "God's Acre," are all simple in theme and unambitious in treatment, yet they have been as the voice of their own hearts to thousands who read poetry for what it is worth to them in sentiment rather than in high art or mystic suggestion. The day has not yet arrived when a poet to be great and famous must write in a diction that needs a neighborhood club to interpret his Orphic lines. And yet there was no affected simpleness in this poet's simplicity, no insipid flatness into which Wordsworth sometimes descended in his zeal for a new poetic theory.

Longfellow's own idea of a poet's mission is stated in the "Belfry of Bruges," whose old-world suggestions are like cathedral chimes in the traveller's memory, illustrating also the author's favorite manner of bringing a homely truth to the minds of his readers through foreign legend or picture. In this instance he compares the rhymes of the poet to the stricken hours at night falling unnoticed on the drowsy ears of the multitude, on roofs and stones of cities. Only here and there some sleepless wight may

listen to the melody, till he hears thoughts long cherished intermingled with the song. But the song itself is :

“ In Bruges, at the Fleur-de-Ble,
Listening with a wild delight,
To the chimes that through the night
Rang their changes from the belfry
Of that quaint old Flemish city,

“ As the evening shades descended,
Low and loud and sweetly blended,
Low at times and loud at times,
And changing like a poet's rhymes,
Rang the beautiful wild chimes,
From the belfry in the market
Of the ancient town of Bruges.”

In “ Nuremberg ” he finds “ memoirs of the middle ages and a wondrous world of art,” but the lesson he brings from the city of Dürer and Hans Sachs, the cobbler-bard, is “ the nobility of labor,—the long pedigree of toil.” And in the “ Norman Baron,” dying in his turreted castle, the one redeeming feature of a life of greed and wrong was the freeing of his serfs.

The time came when, with the rest of New England poets, he raised his voice against slaveholding in a country professing to be free ; but the protest was in his own pacific manner and not in philippic strain of Whittier or the derisive reasoning of Lowell. And therein he kept his own individuality, and that quality which made him the best loved of all our poets. This may not be the highest ambition, or be accompanied by the greatest achievement, but perhaps it is the reward which he himself would most earnestly have coveted and of which even in his lifetime he had a foretaste in tributes of affection from old and young.

This kindly endearment of all classes in two countries the poem of "Evangeline" did more than any other single one to win and augment. It mattered not that poetical justice had to throw the burden of reproach upon the English, where it did not belong, as Parkman has shown in his "Montcalm and Wolfe," instead of upon the priests, who stirred up the people to a continual dispute of the fortunes of war and conquest, until deportation became a necessity of good government. Despite this circumstance, the poet turned English and American sympathy to the French side by enlisting that love which all the world has for a lover, particularly when it happens to be such a sweet and saintly maiden as the daughter of Benedict Bellefontaine, or so valiant a youth as Gabriel Lajeunesse, the son of Basil the blacksmith. From the start all human interest is with the separated lovers in the long search of one for the other—a tale of unrest and wandering, of hope deferred and of a deathbed meeting at last, and the slumber side by side in their nameless graves. It was the floodtide of a humanism that had been growing in our literature, first in the verse of sentimental strain and then in romantic. But this was a welling up of genuine sympathy for the betrothed torn asunder by the fate of war; and the volume and extent of compassionate sorrow was as the mighty tides of Fundy spreading over the basin of Minas close by the acres of Grand Pré. All classes of readers follow the sad quest of love, and become Acadian peasants and pilgrims for the time; and hundreds are every summer making their pilgrimages to see the place which, it is said, the poet himself had not seen when he wrote:

"Evangeline."
line."

"Still stands the forest primeval ; but under the shade of its branches

Dwells another race, with other customs and language.

Only along the shore of the mournful and mighty Atlantic

Linger a few Acadian peasants, whose fathers from exile

Wandered back to their native land to die in its bosom.

In the fisherman's cot the wheel and the loom are still busy,

Maidens still wear their Norman caps and their kirtles of homespun,

And by the evening fire repeat Evangeline's story,

While from its rocky caverns the deep-voiced neighboring ocean

Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest."

Readers also become humanists with Longfellow and friends of the poet who had touched fountains where others had only stirred the surface of the pool. In America and in England he became "the writer of 'Evangeline'" by distinction; and it was this idyl that led strangers to find the same humane elements in his minor productions and to love him as the expositor of hearth and home virtues and affection. It was an international poem in plot and scene, Homeric in measure and worldwide in sympathy. The author was by no means the maker of a single poem, since few have written more than he, but none have been so identified with their best.

Next to this poem "The Song of Hiawatha" commends itself to American readers as the most agreeable reproduction of the aboriginal sources of our verse.

The Indian in literature has generally taken "Hiawatha." the hue of the writer's imagination. He has been portrayed with inks of as many colors as his own war paint, red and blue and black. If, however, a cheerful dye could be found, Longfellow would be sure to dip his Indian in it. Accordingly the light that pervades the poem, or is best recalled, is that of the setting sun cast over a depart-

ing race. Down into this "long track and trail of splendor, into the purple mists of evening," the prophet and prince vanishes at last amidst the sad farewells of his people. But not until he had a vision of the nations forgetful of his counsels and warring with each other, scattered and swept westward, like the withered leaves of autumn. The whole poem is the swan song of a vanishing race, recounting its golden age of pristine happiness, its later decline, and finally the coming of an alien people "from the regions of the morning," followed by the crowding nations of many tongues. None better than our poet of all humanity could have sung this song so truly as to cherish the little sentiment that a conquering race can keep for the conquered. It was in accord with his own benignant holding, that "were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts given to redeem the mind from error, there were no need of forts and arsenals."

The song of the invader was sung in "The Courtship of Miles Standish," which might have been entitled, the loves of John Alden and Priscilla and the redoubtable doings of the Pilgrim Julius Cæsar among the savages. It was the epos of the first encounter, to be drawn out into an epic of conquest in verse and prose, whose last book was "Hiawatha." Its scenes are laid on the waterways from the Atlantic to the last of the great lakes, and from Plymouth to the Rocky Mountains. But the story begins in the Plymouth hamlet from which the "Mayflower" sailed away in the spring of 1621, and by the timber huts and the meeting-house and the spinning-wheel of Priscilla. In it also is the same touch of humanity that makes all in love with lovers once more, and with the poet of whose kindly heart they are the creation.

Everywhere genial sunshine illumines his pages, even though the record be as a black letter chronicle of want and death in the Pilgrim settlement, or of exile and distress, as in Acadia, or of a dispersed people in the far northwest. And if this be true in the sadder phases of life, how much more in the glad experiences which he has filled with light and joy. For this reason, whatever position and rank as a bard in the present or future he may or may not hold, he will always be the best beloved of our American poets.

His own words in the "Dedication" were prophetic of the affection which still flows toward him from all lands:

"As one who, walking in the twilight gloom,
Hears round about him voices as it darkens,
And seeing not the forms from which they come,
Pauses from time to time, and turns and harkens ;

"So walking here in twilight, O my friends !
I hear your voices softened by the distance,
And pause, and turn to listen, as each sends
His words of friendship, comfort, and assistance.

"If any thought of mine, or sung or told,
Has ever given delight or consolation,
Ye have repaid me back a thousand fold,
By every friendly sign and salutation.

"Not chance of birth or place has made us friends,
Being oftentimes of different tongues and nations,
But the endeavor for selfsame ends,
With the same hopes, and fears, and aspirations.

"Therefore I hope, as no unwelcome guest,
At your warm fireside, when the lamps are lighted,
To have my place reserved among the rest,
Nor stand as one unsought and uninvited !"

XXV

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

A LIBERAL spirit which began to assert itself about the middle of the eighteenth century took definite form early in the nineteenth, with William Ellery Channing as its exponent. Emerson was following the latest pattern of theology, when the protesting habit of eight generations of clerical ancestors drove him to break with all ecclesiastical restraint and direction, and to become an independent such as had not been seen in New England. He was the legitimate product of two centuries of corporate individualism. The feature of it which shocked people was that the individual should shake himself clear of the corporation and assert his personal independence. If he had carried a small congregation with him, having a few articles of agreement and belief in common, he would have simply been following numerous precedents. But he chose to stand alone and apart and take the consequences. All this is interesting here only as related to the character of the contributions which he made to literature. These were by no means few nor unimportant.

Another factor to be reckoned with is the general ferment of the time in which Emerson began his work. Reaction against a materialistic view of life and its surroundings had started in Germany and passed through England to America. Prophets of

Independ-
dency.

Restlessness
of the Time.

the ideal were making themselves heard. Coleridge and Carlyle, stirred by Goethe, were sending forth oracular sayings, which, if not always comprehended, set others thinking. The call was for higher thoughts of man and clearer views of nature and the intimate relation of the one to the other. Of this restatement of an old doctrine Emerson, in full sympathy with it, became the interpreter and expositor to his neighbors and fellow citizens of New England and the country at large.

He began upon the lyceum lecture platform in the days when it was a sort of university extension movement with the first minds of the nation in its employ. Information was not of so much account as ^{The Popular Lecture.} inspiration. A race that had inherited the hearing ear through two centuries of sermonizing, and the understanding mind by discussing sharp points of doctrine at home was both fed and entertained by the half-ethical, half-secular discourse which was poured out every week through the winter in the cities and larger towns. The best thought of the time was furnished at the lowest price to each hearer. Moreover, people could afford to listen to speculations from the week-day platform which would not have been tolerated in the Sunday pulpit. If the speaker were only attractive, the audience and the lecture committee would take the risk of unorthodoxy in religion and politics.

Emerson, as a pleasing lecturer, had no lack of opportunities to deliver his message all over the land. It was the form in which he first published it, his books being made up of what he had tested by oral speech to the people. He learned the value of this utterance and that by the response it got from the assembled intelligence

before him. He knew what to keep and what to reject when he came to print.

At length in 1836, he gathered up the residuum of his lecture thoughts in his first book which he called "Nature." In a sense it may be regarded as the declaration of his belief by a man who discarded creeds. The articles of it were neither many nor distinct, but the statement of them was reiterated and varied and emphasized. It opens with depreciation of the traditionary poetry, philosophy, and religion and an appeal for insight and an immediate revelation and "our own works and laws and worship."

"The universe is composed of nature and the soul, of me and the not me. Through me, if I am in childlike sympathy with nature, the currents of universal being flow ; I am part or parcel of God. I am not alone and unacknowledged. The grasses of the field nod to me, the boughs wave in the storm. The resulting delight proceeds from the harmony between man and nature, which always wears the colors of the spirit."

And again :

"Whoever considers the final cause of the world, will discern a multitude of uses that enter as parts into that result. They all admit of being thrown into one of the following classes: Commodity ; Beauty ; Language ; and Discipline."

Under these captions he expands his subject. It is interesting to note his remarks about language and words as the symbols of thoughts.

"A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it, depends upon the simplicity of his character, that is, upon his love of truth, and his desire to communicate it without loss. The corruption of man is followed by corruption of language. Where simplicity of character and the sovereignty of ideas is broken up by the prevalence of secondary

desires — the desire of riches, of pleasure, of power, and of praise — and duplicity and falsehood take the place of simplicity and truth, the power over nature as an interpreter of the will is lost; new imagery ceases to be created, and old words are perverted to stand for things which are not; a paper currency is employed, when there is no bullion in the vaults. Hundreds of writers may be found in every long-civilized nation, who for a short time believe, and make others believe, that they see and utter truths, who do not of themselves clothe one thought in its natural garment, but who feed unconsciously on the language created by the primary writers of the country, those, namely, who hold primarily on nature.

“But wise men pierce this rotten diction and fasten words again to visible things; so that picturesque language is at once a commanding certificate that he who employs it, is a man in alliance with truth and God. . . .

“Amidst agitation and terror in national councils, — in the hour of revolution, — these solemn images shall reappear in their morning lustre, as fit symbols and words of the thoughts which passing events shall awaken. At the call of a noble sentiment, again the woods wave, the pines murmur, the river rolls and shines, and the cattle low upon the mountains as he heard them in his infancy. And with these forms, the spells of persuasion, the keys of power are put into his hands.”

The essays which follow this first statement of his central proposition are amplifications and restatements of it. Of the beauty of nature he says: “Give me health and a day and I will make the ^{Later Essays.} pomp of emperors ridiculous. The dawn is my Assyria, the sunset and moonrise my Paphos and unimaginable realms of faerie, broad noon shall be my England of the senses and the understanding, the night shall be my Germany of mystic philosophy and dreams.” A little later he comes to the idealism which underlies his some-

what mystical discourse, and asks "whether nature outwardly exists," or is the human mind the receiver of certain "sensations which we call sun and moon, man and woman, house and trade? Be nature what it may be, it is ideal to me so long as I cannot try the accuracy of my senses." His restatement of an old philosophic dogma had at least the fascination of a new phrasing, although its practical tests are apt to loosen its hold on common minds when they try to call fire and water appearances instead of realities. But the sage has his word of protest against burlesque conclusions, and insists that the question of the absolute existence of nature still remains open, and if reason be stimulated to more earnest vision, the surface of things will become transparent and their causes and spirits be seen through them. This dualism of nature he then proceeds to explain and illustrate by the tendency of motion, poetry, science, and religion to affect our convictions of the reality of the external world. He concludes by adding that "the advantage of the ideal theory over the popular faith is, that it presents the world in precisely that view which is most desirable to the mind," to be accepted as it is found, unquestioningly and as a part of the lesson we are here to learn. Supplementing these phenomena and the cause and end of their existence is the all-pervading spirit, the present expositor of the divine mind.

These propositions culled from the more intelligible of Emerson's sentences, may not be so clear to the reader as they presumably were to him, but they may
His Style. help to explain the writings which he contributed to our literature and the peculiarity of their construction. Whatever he saw, or thought he saw, according

to his own idealistic theory, was perceived with an intuition which did not wait for the slow steps of logical processes. He did not arrive at conclusions by stages observable to ordinary comprehension. Where there is any connection between one station of his speech and another it is by a submerged wire. There is a flash here, another yonder, but the reader may not immediately discover the path through the sea or earth or air by which the current went. He used to say that his sentences were repellent particles. A paragraph of them, like a handful of bullets, might be arranged in any order, yet singly or together they were effective. This no doubt was the case when they were discharged from the platform. No time was given to make connections, as in reading, but the personality, voice, and emphasis attending oral delivery aided the hearers' apprehension. At any rate, where he was heard once he was sent for again — except possibly in that town where a minister followed the lecturer with a prayer that they might be "delivered from ever again hearing such transcendental nonsense."

Twelve years were required to sell five hundred copies of "Nature," but its readers were many and the commotion it made corresponded to the strangeness of its doctrines. These were restated in clearer language before the scholars of Harvard in 1837 in an oration on the "American Scholar," which Dr. Holmes was pleased to term "our intellectual declaration of independence." The speaker opened with the announcement that our day of independence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close, and took up his theme of "Man Thinking" as opposed to the parrot of other men's thoughts.

"Nature is the first instructor of this thinking man, then the mind of the past in literature, and next action in the world of affairs, inspiring confidence in himself. Without deference to the popular cry, he is to bide his time and wait for the recognition of the future. Nobility is in that which is near, and success in abiding by the best instincts until the world follows.

"The first in time and the first in importance of the influences upon the mind is that of nature. Every day the sun ; and after sunset, night and her stars. Ever the winds blow ; ever the grass grows. Every day, men and women, conversing, beholding and beholden. The scholar is he of all men whom this spectacle most engages. He must settle its value in his mind. What is nature to him? . . . To the young mind, everything is individual, stands by itself. By and by it finds how to join two things, and see in them one nature ; then three, then three thousand ; and so tyrannized over by its own unifying instinct, it goes on tying things together, diminishing anomalies, discovering roots running under ground, whereby contrary and remote things cohere, and flower out from one stem. The ambitious soul sits down before each refractory fact ; one after another, reduces all strange constitutions, all new powers, to their class and law, and goes on forever to animate the last fibre of organization, the outskirts of nature, by insight."

Here again the speaker's personality amounted to more than subsequent meditation on the printed report of what he said. Lowell declared that "it was an event without any former parallel in our literary annals—a scene to be always treasured in the memory for picturesqueness and inspiration." A leader had arisen who was to give a new direction to the thoughts of his comrades and to stir his antagonists to revising their ancient system of defences.

As an inspirer and quickener of thinking minds Emerson was a special providence to American letters. Some considered him as an inscrutable visitation of Providence

upon New England, and treated him accordingly; but many were inclined to call what they could not understand heresy, and what they knew was unorthodox they labelled transcendentalism, and half hoped they should hear more of him. They could not resist the gracious manner, the benignant face, the sincerity, the optimism, the strong sense, the genial spirit, and the lofty intellectual flight of the greatest thinker of his time in his country. He appeared as the importer of the outer world's philosophy and its interpreter, as Longfellow had introduced the legendary lore of its poetry. Together the two leaders gave the nation an impulse in letters which radiated in several directions.

A Stimulant.

After the publication of "Nature," in 1836, he continued to assemble the best of his lectures in the form of essays, a first series in 1841 and a second in 1844.

These were followed at irregular intervals by "Miscellanies," "Representative Men," "English Traits," "The Conduct of Life," and others, down to the "Sovereignty of Ethics" in 1878, twenty-four titles in about forty-five years of production, spanning the second and third quarters of the century.

Prose
Writings.

A sample of his style may be taken at random, for there was no radical change in his product from first to last. This is from "Prospects" in the volume of "Miscellanies":

"So shall we come to look at the world with new eyes. It shall answer the endless inquiry of the intellect — what is truth? and of the affections — what is good? by yielding itself passive to the educated will. There shall come to pass what the poet said, 'Nature is not fixed, but fluid.' Spirit alters, molds, makes it. The immobility or bruteness of nature is the absence of spirit; to pure spirit it is fluid, it is volatile, it is obedient.

Every spirit builds itself a home; and beyond its house is its world, and beyond its world a heaven. Know then that the world exists for you. For you is the phenomenon perfect. What we are, that only can we see. All that Adam had, all that Cæsar could, you have and can do. Adam called his house, heaven and earth; Cæsar called his house, Rome; you perhaps call yours, a cobbler's trade; a hundred acres of ploughed land; or a scholar's garret. Yet line for line and point for point, your dominion is as great as theirs, though without fine names. Build, therefore, your own world." . . .

To the general reader it will be a waste of time to attempt a paraphrase of such pages into expanded and connected discourse. It would be next to impossible, if the tradition of Emerson's composition is true — that he selected from notebooks sentences enough for an essay and arranged them about a topic as well as time would permit. If so he deserves in a sense the scholastic title of the Middle Ages — Master of Sentences. He may also be called an artist in mosaic; but of continuous and connected discourse he would never have called himself a master, nor would any one else, unless endowed with seven-league boots to keep step with this giant as he strode from point to point in his intuitional processes.

Among the volumes of prose which frequently appeared, books of "Poems" were issued in 1847 and 1865, with single poems and revisions at other times.

Verse.

They cannot be overlooked in any account of Emerson's literary work, since he has been regarded by some as a greater poet than prose writer. Moreover, if he had any higher or choicer thought than common he preferred to put it in verse. And to the ordinary reader it will seem that if he had any more abstruse and mystical thought than usual, he enclosed it in measures and lines

equally difficult to comprehend on customary theories of poetic composition. The thought is undoubtedly exalted, possibly too sublime for ordinary apprehension, but even a great poet is limited by the laws of prosody, if he aims to please the ear of his readers. He may say that thought is of more consequence than expression, but not if it is to be understood, or if metre and rhyme are of value in poetry. But this independent singer declared his position in this respect, and illustrated it at the same time when he wrote of the poet:

“ He shall not his brain encumber
With coil of rhythm and number;
But leaving rule and pale forethought,
He aye shall climb
For his rhyme.”

But the climbing for the measure here suggests the anticlimax of an inverted ladder. So, too, the terseness of the following does not add to its perspicuity:

“ Mine and yours; mine not yours,
Earth endures; stars abide —
Shine in the old sea;
Old as the shores, but where are old men?
I who have seen much
Such have I never seen.”

“ Of Owning Land ” is clear, though half prose:

“ They called me theirs,
Who so controlled me;
Yet every one
Wished to stay and is gone.
How am I theirs
If they cannot hold me,
But I hold them.”

His answer to his own question "Where are old men?" is found in "The World Love" in good verse:

"Spring still makes spring in the mind
When sixty years are told;
Love makes anew this throbbing heart,
And we are never old.
Over the winter glaciers
I see the summer glow,
And through the wild-piled snowdrift
The warm rosebuds glow."

After these qualifications it may be asked wherein does the value and popularity of Emerson's poetry consist, so far as it is popular? Undoubtedly in its cheerfulness first of all. There are beautiful poems which can be well enough understood by any reader to make him feel that both sides of everything were bright to the poet. If dark to-day it will be sunny to-morrow. Midnight will be noon in twelve hours. He believed in the evolution of everything toward a better state. Meantime be patient:

"I will wait heaven's perfect hour
Through the innumerable years."

Be laborious also:

"On bravely through the sunshine and the showers!
Time hath his work to do — and we have ours."

A people given to sombre views of life relish the optimistic views of a strong thinker who helps them hold up their heads and keep a good heart amidst real or fancied ills. They can forego the fine art of Poe's twilight and spectral verse if they can find optimism in lines which are not always regular or quite as intelligible as these:

“ Yet spake yon purple mountain,
Yet said yon ancient wood,
That night or day, that love or crime
Leads all souls to the good.”

So his sturdy and wholesome love of nature commends his verse to those who are in sympathy with its rugged aspects. His “Snow Storm” is next to Whittier’s as far as it goes; the “Rhodora” an exquisite flower piece, and the “Humble Bee” an “animated torrid zone” of verse, as the bee itself was of insect life. Nothing in the material universe was beyond his interest; but he looked upon nothing long, whether flower of the field or star of heaven, without a vision of the spiritual truth it symbolized. Of this he was the clear-eyed seer and a proclaimer to his generation of what he saw. If men accepted his interpretation it was well. If not, he had no word of impatient censure, saying only :

“ Life is too short to waste
In critic peep or cynic bark,
Quarrel or reprimand,
’T will soon be dark.”

XXVI

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

MANY of the makers of literature in the first half of the nineteenth century had searched diligently for fresh material in the new country. Some had found it in the Indian, and others in the war for independence, or in life and adventures on the frontier. At last a New Englander appeared who found in the bleak and dreary existence of the first settlers the germ of the greatest romances that have been written on American soil.

It was fit that he should be born in Salem, the next town to be settled after Plymouth. Believers in heredity will think that one in whose veins the bluest blood of the Puritans ran was best able to understand their bigoted righteousness on the one hand and on the other their strict conscientiousness.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, born in 1804, a year later than Emerson, was the descendant of six generations of seafaring men, who had their homes in the old town. A remote ancestor had been a judge who had sentenced unhappy victims of the witchcraft delusion to be hanged. A gloom as of remorse seems to have descended with the race. It was not dissipated by the seclusion in which the mother of Hawthorne kept herself after his father's death on a South American voyage. The boy's free life for a few years in the Maine lake and woods country, where the family had an estate, was good for his

Early Years
and Writings.

physique and his reflective faculties, but not for companionable qualities. If these were developed by four years at Bowdoin College, they certainly were not by ten subsequent years of seclusion in the Salem home. But the three periods together prepared him for the highest achievement in the single direction in which he chose to work for over thirty years.

He began writing in the retirement of the Salem house after his graduation. For ten years in the privacy of his room he wrote stories and burned most of them. Occasionally one would get into the "Salem Gazette," the "Knickerbocker Magazine," the "Token," or the "Era" over an anonymous signature, but more of them went up the chimney, leaving behind, however, the strength which practice gives. After three years of working and waiting the youthful author tested his accumulations of power by publishing "Fanshawe," a story of college days. The limited demand for it showed him that his time for recognition had not yet come. So he continued to labor for nine more years of apprenticeship to his profession — at that time an unpromising one. At the end of this period, in 1837, the first volume of "Twice-Told Tales" appeared, and the world knew, if Hawthorne did not, that patience had done its perfect work. Not that he had attained the preëminence of a later achievement, but that in the domain of the sketch he had surpassed the efforts of his predecessor, Irving. Many of these short stories had been printed in various publications without attracting attention, but when gathered in a volume they seemed suddenly to acquire an importance previously undiscovered.

No one can say how long the author would have had to wait for recognition had not his friend Bridge confidentially

assured a hesitating publisher that he would assume the risk of a first edition. It was he who, as a classmate in college, had constantly insisted that Hawthorne should be a writer of romance, and upon him Hawthorne playfully charges the responsibility of his choice of literature as a vocation. But his immediate success was doubtful to the author himself. In the preface to a later edition of his first book he wrote: "The author has a claim to one distinction which none of his literary brethren will care about disputing with him. He was for a good many years the obscurest man of letters in America. Throughout the time above specified he had no incitement to literary effort in a reasonable prospect of reputation or profit, nothing but the pleasure itself of composition, which in the long run will hardly keep the chill out of a writer's heart or the numbness out of his fingers. To this total lack of sympathy the public owe it that the author can show nothing for the thought and industry of that portion of his life save the forty sketches included in these volumes."

There have been many young writers since his day who would have been repaid for a dozen years of labor by such a product, but there are few who would have persevered under the same depressing conditions. Despite his genuine modesty he had an assuring confidence in his own gifts which carried him on through the laborious years until recognition came. He could say of them long after in a letter dedicatory to his friend Bridge:

"But was there ever such a weary delay in obtaining the slightest recognition from the public as in my case? I sat down by the wayside of life like a man under enchantment. . . . And there, perhaps, I should be sitting at this moment if it had not been for you." This

was written fourteen years after the first volume of the "Tales" was published, when others were added under the title of the "Snow Image." Some of them were among the earliest that he wrote and some of later composition. With some he is disposed to quarrel because of their early faults and with others because they approach so nearly to the best he can now achieve. To many writers it is gratifying that such an artist as Hawthorne could say: "The ripened autumnal fruit tastes but little better than the early windfalls." Those who in 1837 read the first collection of the stories might have predicted what would be the output of a writer who must have seemed to appear suddenly and full-fledged among them. Old New England is portrayed in the first sketch and introduced in its first sentence. "The Gray Champion" links the province with the mother country, and the administration of Sir Edmund Andros with the spirit of resistance to tyranny which resulted in eventual independence. It was the commonwealth against the Stuarts on American territory, with an Ironside patriarch, or the ghost of him, as leader of the independents.

" 'Stand !' cried he.

"At the old man's word and outstretched arm, the roll of the drum was hushed at once, and the advancing line stood still. That stately form combining the leader and the saint, so gray, so dimly seen, in such an ancient garb, could only belong to some old champion of the righteous cause, whom the oppressor's drum had summoned from his grave. They raised a shout of awe and exultation, and looked for the deliverance of New England. . . One would have thought that the dark old man was chief ruler there, and that the Governor and Council, with soldiers at their back, representing the whole power and authority of the Crown had no alternative but obedience.

“‘What does this old fellow here?’ cried Edward Randolph, fiercely. ‘On, Sir Edmund! Bid the soldiers forward, and give the dotard the same choice that you gave all his countrymen — to stand aside or be trampled on!’

“‘Nay, nay, let us show respect to the good grandsire,’ said Bullivant, laughing. ‘See you not, he is some old round-head dignitary who hath lain asleep these thirty years, and knows nothing of the change of times? Doubtless, he thinks to put us down with a proclamation in old Noll’s name.’

“‘Are you mad, old man?’ demanded Sir Edmund Andros. ‘How dare you stay the march of King James’s Governor?’

“‘I have stayed the march of a King himself, ere now,’ replied the gray figure, with stern composure. ‘I am here, Sir Governor, because the cry of an oppressed people hath disturbed me in my secret place; and, beseeching this favor earnestly of the Lord, it was vouchsafed me to appear once again on earth, in the good old cause of his saints. . . . Back, thou that wast a Governor, back! With this night thy power is ended — to-morrow, the prison! — back, lest I foretell the scaffold!’

“The people had been drawing nearer and nearer. They confronted the soldiers, not wholly without arms, and ready to convert the very stones of the street into deadly weapons. Sir Edmund Andros looked at the old man; then he cast his hard and cruel eye over the multitude, and beheld them burning with that lurid wrath, so difficult to kindle or to quench; but whether the oppressor were overawed by the Gray Champion’s look, or perceived his peril in the threatening attitude of the people, it is certain that he gave back, and ordered his soldiers to commence a slow and guarded retreat. Before another sunset, the Governor, and all that rode so proudly with him, were prisoners, and long ere it was known that James had abdicated, King William was proclaimed throughout New England.”

But political features of colonial life do not so much concern its romancer as the social, religious, and mental states and conditions which prevailed in the early period.

Of course a minister must appear among the first portraits of the time in all the reverend consequence which he shared with the magistrate. The one who wore the black veil introduced the element of ^{Puritan Traditions.} mystery half accounted for, which henceforth is to constitute a subtle fascination in this magician's performances. The secret will die with the priest, and the multitude will be left to its own conjectures with little help from two or three plausible suggestions from the author toward a solution of the mystery. Neither will there always be an obtrusion of the moral. Sometimes as if in fear that the mystery had clouded the meaning of the story, as in "The Maypole," "Wakefield," and "Prophetic Pictures," the author makes clear his purpose, but oftener the high art of the narrative conveys it as surely and insensibly as the breeze carries health or infection.

In the years of his preparation for larger works he did the best that he could have done for himself and for posterity in rewriting scraps of history, biography, and mythology for children. His keen sense of the susceptibility of childhood to that which is best in life and literature made him regard as conscientious endeavor the books bearing the attractive titles of "The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair," "A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys," "True Stories from History and Biography," and "Tanglewood Tales." There is true wisdom in his remark, that "if a writer succeeds in pleasing his little readers he may hope to be remembered by them till their own old age—a far longer period of literary existence than is generally attained by those who seek immortality from the judgments of full-grown men." In particular his sketches of New England history prepare the young

reader for the author's treatment of its inner spirit in the romances which were to follow these studies in local color.

In 1839 Hawthorne left his Salem home for a position in the Boston custom-house, and in 1841 was drawn into the transient side-show of the transcendentalists — the Brook Farm Community. He stayed long enough to learn that an ideal life does not consist in violating the maxim of "every man to his trade," and that as a rule novelists do not succeed as field hands, however diligently they may perform their tasks. The next year he married and went to live in the old parsonage at Concord that had been built for Emerson's grandfather, and from which he had witnessed the first battle of the Revolution. There also Emerson had written "Nature," his first work. In the three years' stay Hawthorne wrote more stories and sketches, now known as "Mosses from an Old Manse." Then came three years of drudgery in the Salem custom-house, affording a better living, but little opportunity for literary work. But the spoils system could not turn aside for the benefit of genius, which accordingly had to make room for a Whig in 1849. "Now you can write your book," was the exclamation of the wife when she was told of the place lost, and she showed the money she had been saving week by week against an evil day. The next year, 1850, "The Scarlet Letter" appeared — the masterpiece of New England fiction in the century.

Hitherto Hawthorne had been a writer of stories, a commendable occupation in spite of the exclamation which he put into a Puritan ancestor's mouth, "Why the fellow had better have been a fiddler." But he got even with him and all his austere

"The Scarlet Letter" and Other Romances.

forbears in this romance of the dark ages in the Bay Province. It is a vision of sin through its consequences. It is also and more a tragedy of hypocrisy, in the strain of seeming rather than being, and unwearied revenge casts its shadow over all. The author took no risks of his purpose being misunderstood when he wrote at the end: "Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred."

The twenty-five years of waiting for recognition were over and the supremacy of the author of "The Scarlet Letter" was established by the sale of the entire first edition in ten days. After this success, phenomenal for the times, "The Snow Image" and "The House of Seven Gables" follow during his residence of a year and a half at Lenox. In the winter of 1851-52 at West Newton he finished "The Blithedale Romance," based on his memories of Brook Farm. In "The House of Seven Gables" he prolongs the shadows of early Puritan days in a dark story of retribution — the sin of the fathers following the children to the third and fourth generation.

The patronage which royalty sometimes pays to men of letters had in this republic and in Hawthorne's instance been limited to custom-house salaries. But when Franklin Pierce, his college mate and lifelong friend, came into the presidential chair he appointed our foremost novelist to the remunerative consulship at Liverpool. At last official prerogative was well employed. And when his term of service had expired the man whose observation had been restricted to Massachusetts first, and next to so much of England as he could visit from his consular office, was now permitted to pass some years in continental

residence and travel. Out of this came in 1860 "The Marble Faun," a romance in which the shadows of ancient Rome fall upon modern life. Still it is the same human heart upon which he is brooding in Italy as in New England, with the same subtle analysis, suggestion, and partial explanation in Miriam and Donatello as in Zenobia, Judge Pyncheon, and Arthur Dimmesdale. Everywhere the demonstrator of psychological anatomy is apparent and preëminent. He finds with unerring certainty the motors which do the deed, and back of them he more than hints at impelling causes and soul forces viewless as the winds. With consummate art he stops at the line, not always discerned, between suggestion and bald statement, leaving to the intelligent reader the privilege of discovering, or thinking that he has discovered, something by himself. Besides there is the strange attraction which belongs to the unearthly, the fantastic, and the ghostly, beginning with the love of creepy horrors in childhood and continuing into later years.

Recall the portrait he drew of Judge Pyncheon :

"The judge has not shifted his position for a long while now. He holds his watch in his left hand, but clutched in such a manner that you cannot see the dial-plate. How profound a fit of meditation ! You hear the ticking of his watch ; his breath you do not hear. A most refreshing slumber, doubtless ! And yet, the judge cannot be asleep. His eyes are open ! No, no ! Judge Pyncheon cannot be asleep.

"This was to have been such a busy day ! He was to meet a State-street broker, who has undertaken to procure a heavy percentage, and the best of paper, for a few loose thousands which the judge happens to have by him, uninvested. Half an hour later there was to be an auction of real estate, including a portion of the old Pyncheon property, originally belonging to

Maule's garden-ground. The judge had kept it in his eye, and had set his heart on reannexing it to the small demesne still left around the seven gables;—and now during this odd fit of oblivion, the fatal hammer must have fallen, and transferred our ancient patrimony to some alien possessor!"

And then, after sundry other matters of business,—the purchase of a horse, the renewal of Mrs. Pyncheon's tombstone, a conference with political friends about the November election, and a case for charity, he must consult his physician:

"About what, for Heaven's sake? Why, it is rather difficult to describe the symptoms. A mere dimness of sight and dizziness of brain, was it? No matter what it was. But a fig for medical advice! The judge will never need it.

"Up, therefore, Judge Pyncheon, up! You have lost a day. But to-morrow will be here anon. Will you rise, betimes, and make the most of it? To-morrow! To-morrow! To-morrow! We, that are alive, may rise betimes to-morrow. As for him that has died to-day, his morrow will be the resurrection morn.

"Rise up, thou subtile, worldly, selfish, iron-hearted hypocrite, and make thy choice whether still to be subtile, worldly, selfish, iron-hearted, and hypocritical, or to tear these sins out of thy nature, though they bring the life-blood with them! The Avenger is upon thee! Rise up before it be too late!

"Art thou too weak, that wast so powerful? Nay, then, we give thee up!"

The outlines of this portraiture given here cannot convey the masterly detail of suggestion and description occupying an entire chapter. With the light raillery of a friendly neighbor he addresses the important magistrate of the town as he seems to his townsmen, but beneath the fair panoply of words is the keen perception of guile and

hypocrisy, of greed and injustice and of ill-deserving amidst apparent prosperity and honor. It is here as in the other volumes: for some readers there is the masterly construction of singular characters around some overpowering trait to which all others conform in fateful and obedient consistency, or against which they contend with unavailing struggles. Others will take delight in a style in which the law of adaptation is never transgressed: the one word best revealing the present shade of thought being used and rightly placed, while the prevailing tone is everywhere that of the scene presented. More than other qualities, yet supplemented by them, is the high moral purpose pervading all of Hawthorne's writings. If at times they are shadowed with the forms of evil, it is because they are never absent from human life. He does not, however, dwell upon their disgusting features, but rather upon the consequences of harboring them. And this in contrast to the better way, the nobler life, the final triumph of what is right and just and true. He does not preach, but there are few sermons which so effectively convey their message as the sketches and romances of this instructor in ethics.

His place in literature is not a doubtful one. It is now a third of a century since the last of his four great romances was written, to be followed by "Our Old Home" as the impressions of England were called, and this by "American and Foreign Note Books," an unfinished work published after his death. But meantime no writer has caught his art, or clothed himself with the genius which comes not by labor. Hawthorne discovered his field and so harvested it that later explorers have been but gleaners. Critics can point out the minor defects which prove him

to have written with the pen of a mortal and not of a recording angel, but all the greater is the testimony of what criticism has left untouched — the larger part — to the genius of the greatest romancer of the nineteenth century in America.

XXVII

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

THE antecedents and surroundings of authors are always an interesting element in any account of what they produced. In some degree they give tone and color to the product. A second thought, however, must sometimes be taken to adjust their themes and methods of treatment to their manner of life. And often a further inquiry into characteristic traits must be made in order to understand why they wrote as they did.

Of none is this truer than of Lowell, a boy with the inheritance of good birth and breeding and literary attainment, who grew up in a library, went through Harvard, reading out-of-the-way authors, absorbing the flavor of remote literatures, and then turning out — as the work by which he was first recognized — “The Biglow Papers,” a political satire in Yankee dialect on the Mexican War. The form of it might have been attributed to a down-east schoolmaster, except that he would not have dared to shock over-nice proprieties by lines like these:

Dialect
Verse.

“Thrash away, you ’ll hev to rattle
On them kittle-drums o’ yourn —
’T ain’t a knowin’ kind o’ cattle
Thet is ketched with mouldy corn ;
Put in stiff, you fifer feller,
Let folks see how spry you be —
Guess you ’ll toot till you are yellor
’Fore you git a-hold o’ me !”

No, a priggish versifier would not have risked his reputation on such naturalism, but just as the well-bred man will in sport violate the conventionalities of behavior with a freedom from which another shrinks for fear that he may be charged with ignorance of good usage, so Lowell dared to sport in rhymes from which a less assured poet would have recoiled. Besides, there was another reason. The burning question of extension of territory in the interest of slavery was coming to the front. A few orators and editors were laboring in vain with an obsequious North. Pulpits were watching the wind and counselling peace and compromise. This poet, who had the soul of a crusader, recently stirred to see the real drift of a humane issue, as by intuition hit upon a method of persuasion more effective than all the serious talk of premature reformers. The homely sense of the provincial Yankee needed to be addressed in its own vernacular and with its own wit. The New Englander may or may not see the serious side of affairs, but he cannot resist the ridiculous phase clothed in his own lingo. Garrison might print his appeals of iron logic and be mobbed. Whittier might write his "Lament of a Slave Mother" to have it called sentimentalism run wild, but the coast trader who had grown rich in Boston could not be impervious to this :

"Them thet rule us, them slave-traders,
Hain't they cut a thunderin' swath
(Helped by Yankee renegaders)
Thru the vartu of the North?
We begin to think it 's nater
To take sarse and not be riled;
Who'd expect to see a tater
All on eend at bein' biled?"

On the general wrong and the particular misery of war "Hosee" is equally emphatic and pertinent. He did not stop the war, but the men who enlisted after his vivid letters from camp had their eyes open to what awaited them. Meantime the country at large read a statement of the real issue at stake in the Mexican War such as could not be found in the newspapers and presidential messages. They became familiar with the grounds of a controversy which was coming nearer home twenty years later. Then another series of Biglow papers would do the same service to the same cause in the straits of a civil war. Both together, in verse or prose, will remain as evidence of the aid which an accomplished man of letters could give in a great crisis by knowing how and by daring to be efficient at the risk of criticism.

If it be said that he had Burns' dialect verse as a precedent, it will be remembered that the Ayrshire ploughman could write nothing else so well, which is not true of Lowell, as both his earlier and later poems show. Some notice of these should be taken before recalling his prose writings.

Of his earlier poems he said he would gladly suppress many if he could, but the injustice of the copyright law placed them beyond his control. It is the penalty of success that poor work as well as good must go to swell "the only complete edition" of this and that publisher. Still if a dozen compilers of Lowell's best poems were each to make a selection, it is probable that few would be omitted from the total choice of all. And a few would be found in every collection. Those which belong to that springtime of life, as well as of the year, when the heart of the young man "lightly turns to love" will appeal to

all who have not forgotten when they too were young. In "My Love" he sang for himself and for many another youth :

"Not as all other women are
Is she that to my soul is dear."

And, of course, there would be at least one address to "The Moon," and also a "Serenade," whose burden is :

"Must we forever, then, be alone,
Alone, alone, ah, woe ! alone !"

There are songs in the same strain to "Allegra," to "M. L.," to "Perdita," to "Rosaline," which any lover might be proud to write for another man ; but then if he had the courage to print them as Poems of
Sentiment. the outpourings of his own young heart he must, when older, "accept with silent contrition the consequences, and consent to the reprinting of old editions without excision," as the poet himself did against his will, adding Petrarch's words to Boccaccio, "We neither of us are such poets as we thought ourselves when we were younger." It should be said, however, that this poet's lady-love was all that his pen portrayed, and that her strong convictions on a great philanthropic question turned Lowell from the more than indifference of his Commencement poem to the championship exhibited in the "Biglow Papers."

When his life was no longer "alone," manifold and larger interests began to appeal to a thoughtful spirit meditating upon the problems and touched by the sad experiences which come to all. The fortunes of rich and poor are set forth in "The Heritage ;" the sickness which wastes alarms in "The Prayer ;" the death which comes is deplored in "The Requiem." In "Rheucus" is discovered the poet's large sympathy with the Graver
Verse.

voices of nature, and with its hidden beauty in "Beaver Brook," and in the "Stanzas on Freedom" an early note that was prolonged in fuller strain in the "Interview with Miles Standish" and the "Capture of the Fugitives." As the climax of all this early verse, "The Vision of Sir Launfal" unites the spirit of the seasons with the purpose of the heart and finds the guerdon that is sought wearily and afar in the lowly disguise of an overlooked opportunity lying as a beggar at the doors.

"His words were shed softer than leaves from the pine,
 And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows on the brine,
 That mingle their softness and quiet in one
 With the shaggy unrest they float down upon ;
 And the voice that was softer than silence said,
 'Lo it is I, be not afraid !
 In many climes, without avail,
 Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail ;
 Behold it is here, — this cup which thou
 Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now ;
 This crust is my body broken for thee,
 This water his blood that died on the tree ;
 The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
 In whatso we share with another's need ;
 Not what we give, but what we share,
 For the gift without the giver is bare ;
 Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,
 Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me.'
 Sir Launfal awoke as from a swoon :
 'The Grail in my castle here is found !
 Hang my idle armor up on the wall,
 Let it be the spider's banquet-hall ;
 He must be fenced with stronger mail
 Who would seek and find the Holy Grail.'

"The Castle gate stands open now,
 And the wanderer is welcome to the hall
 As the hang-bird is to the elm-tree bough ;
 No longer scowl the turrets tall,

The Summer's long siege at last is o'er;
 When the first poor outcast went in at the door,
 She entered with him in disguise
 And mastered the fortress by surprise;
 There is no spot she loves so well on ground,
 She lingers and smiles there the whole year round;
 The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's land
 Has hall and bower at his command;
 And there's no poor man in the North Countree
 But is lord of the earldom as much as he."

No student of American literature can afford to pass over "A Fable for Critics," in which is reck-
 lessly told what the prince of critics thought of "Fable for Critics."
 his fellows and contemporary authors. First he pays a compliment to the critic as

"One of the omnivorous swallows,
 Who bolt every book that comes out of the press,
 Without the least question of larger or less,
 A reading machine always wound up and agoing,
 He masters whatever is not worth the knowing,
 Then, rising by industry, knack and address,
 Gets notices up for an unbiased press."

And so on for several pages of pasquinade on the craft of reviewers with a jeering audacity which reminds one of the taunts of his tormentors by an Indian brave tied to the stake and waiting to be roasted.

His characterization of his literary co-workers was taken with more or less good grace, according as they felt secure or otherwise in their position and above the daring frolicsomeness of a youthful member of the guild of letters. Emerson doubtless smiled in a charitable, philosophic way, as well he might, over the sum of what was said, while Willis cannot be blamed for putting up a supercilious stare at the newcomer, and Bryant might

justly have turned cooler than usual after being compared to an iceberg. Whittier could not have relished allusion to incorrect syntax and prosody, nor Dana to his own idleness and indecision. And so of others — Parker, Cooper, Longfellow, Halleck, Poe, Irving, Holmes, and finally, as a sop to Cerberus, Lowell wrote of himself:

“ There is Lowell, who ’s striving Parnassus to climb,
With a whole bale of isms tied together with rhyme.
His lyre has some chords that would ring pretty well,
But he ’d rather by half make a drum of the shell,
And rattle away till he ’s old as Methusalem,
At the head of a march to the New Jerusalem.”

But this was always some city of God, and the verse which he wrote on the way or beneath its walls had in it the ring of the old crusading hymns. To it one
War Poems. will turn from the merry quips of youthful rhyme as to the deeper currents on which the other floated as bubbles of mirth. How deep and strong were these currents of devotion to what was best in human life and national life is seen in the poems of his later years. Particularly in the collection entitled “Poems of the War” is revealed a patriotism whose strength and sincerity are measured by the tributes to kindred and friends fallen in the strife. “The Washers of the Shroud” is the war song of an uplifted manhood, gathering itself in the first year of conflict for the doing and the suffering which was to come in the succeeding years of uncertain duration and final issue. Then followed the requiem for one who —

“ Right in the van,
On the red rampart’s slippery swell,
With heart that beat a charge, he fell
Forward, as fits a man.”

The culmination of all the poetry of that fateful time came in the "Commemoration Ode" of 1865, when Harvard laid the laurel wreath on the grave of her sons who had died to save the nation. In it Lowell is seen at his best and noblest, chanting a dirge for the heroes slain which becomes a song of triumph at last for a nation saved :

" Be proud ! for she is saved, and all have helped to save her !
She that lifts up the manhood of the poor,
She of the open soul and open door,
With room about her hearth for all mankind !

" What were our lives without thee ?
What all our lives to save thee ?
We reck not what we gave thee ;
We will not dare to doubt thee,
But ask whatever else, and we will dare ! "

Memorial poems follow this lofty strain as prolonged echoes, and then the themes of peace conclude the product of years. A tribute to Curtis and another to Agassiz show how far elegiac verse has drifted from Puritan fashions. "Endymion" is a glance backward toward Greece and myth, "Phoebe" a return to birdland and the dews of the morning. "Fitz Adam's Story" is the fragment of an uncompleted series after the manner of the "Canterbury Tales," in which the humorist gets back to Yankee-land again with Ezra Weeks and Uncle Reuben and Jethro and other down-easters in the tavern on Quompegan street. And there the poetic side of Lowell must be left with his cronies, but not in a room which might have been across the road, the picture of which is worthy of Chaucer :

" There was a parlor in the house, a room
To make you shudder with its prudish gloom.
The furniture stood round with such an air,
There seemed an old maid's ghost in every chair,

Which looked as it had scuttled to its place
 And pulled extempore a Sunday face,
 Too smugly proper for a world of sin,
 Like boys on whom the minister comes in.
 The table, fronting you with icy stare
 Strove to look witless that its legs were bare,
 While the black sofa with its horse-hair pall
 Gloomed like a bier for Comfort's funeral.
 Each piece appeared to do its chilly best
 To seem an utter stranger to the rest,
 As if acquaintanceship were deadly sin,
 Like Britons meeting in a foreign inn.
 Two portraits graced the wall in grimmest truth,
 Mister and Mistress W. in their youth, —
 New England youth, that seems a sort of pill,
 Half wish-I-dared, half Edwards on the Will,
 Bitter to swallow, and which leaves a trace
 Of Calvinistic colic on the face.
 Between them, o'er the mantel, hung in state
 Solomon's temple, done in copperplate;
 Invention pure, but meant, we may presume,
 To give some Scripture sanction to the room.
 Facing this, two samplers you might see,
 Each, with its urn and stiffly-weeping tree,
 Devoted to some memory long ago
 More faded than their lines of worsted woe;
 But paper decked their frames against the flies,
 Though none dared an entrance who were wise,
 And bushed asparagus in fading green
 Added its shiver to the franklin clean."

The prose writings must have less attention than they deserve. For the most part they are the result of three years' editorship of the "Atlantic Monthly" and of nine years on the staff of the "North American Review." No one can say how much of this would have been furnished in addition to the labors of his Harvard professorship if it had not been for the demands of these periodicals. Emerson loftily says:

Prose
 Writings.

"Hitch your wagon to a star." This is well enough for the sage of Concord, but to get the most out of a common man hitch him to a printing press that is run on schedule time. Fortunately Lowell had to be on time but once a month with the "Atlantic" and once a quarter with the "Review," but that was often enough for what he brought to press. In some of his contributions there is stock sufficient to furnish an ordinary writer for a lifetime if it should be judiciously watered. In other essays it might require a short lifetime to follow to their remote starting places the lines of allusion and suggestion that are concentrated within the compass of a half-hour's reading. These allusions have sometimes been an offence to critics, who have in consequence called Lowell pedantic. Of course the pleasing quality of an allusion depends upon the reader's acquaintance with what is alluded to; but if he should not happen to have been so extensive a traveller in the domains of literature, history, or science as his author, any mention of something he has not met with is exasperating. He may have to stop and consult some book of reference. On the other hand it is complimentary in a writer to take for granted that his reader's information equals his own, and allusion to things familiar to him is on the whole more pardonable than ignorance about them. His early punning propensity cannot, to be sure, be so easily condoned. It belongs to the effervescence of youth, which he was long in outgrowing, and is as reprehensible as the froth from a beer bottle just uncorked, which has, however, the merit of indicating that what follows will not be stale. And as for his enlivening fancy, its evolutions and transformations are pyrotechnic to the matter-of-fact reader, but radiant with creative light to a sympathetic

understanding. It is the glow of a living intelligence throwing off heat and splendor, quickening and illuminating anything within its reach — except those who put on smoked and critical glasses to count the number of scintillations per minute.

The range of these essays is almost as wide as that of the author's learning or his fancy. Critical a large part of them would naturally be from his editorial position, but the criticism is creative and suggestive and appreciative as well as corrective. It opens the gates into wide and often unexplored fields of literature, where the difficulty of following him becomes a pleasure. In his "Library of Old English Authors" he gives glimpses of treasures unsuspected by the reader of modern books. In the essays upon Chaucer and Spenser and Shakespeare and Milton, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, and Coleridge he displays the wealth of English poetry, with frequent allusion to the classics of other lands. The literature of travel is enriched by his "Italy," and "At Sea;" of the woods, by his "Moosehead Journal;" of the academic town, by "Cambridge Thirty Years Ago;" of biography, by his reminiscences of distinguished contemporaries, American and foreign. Even the New England climate is treated better than it deserves in his "A Good Word for Winter;" also critical travellers from over the sea in his "Condescension in Foreigners." "'How am I vulgar?'" asks the [American] culprit, shudderingly. 'Because thou art not like unto Us,' answers Lucifer, son of the morning, and there is no more to be said." For a returned ambassador who has been accused of un-American sympathies this essay should be a vindication, if his patriotism ever needed defending. It is also good to read

as a tonic before crossing the Atlantic, or after returning as a restorative to a disturbed equilibrium.

It may be true that Lowell is an author for the studious rather than the man of affairs — to use an indefinite term. But all pleasure of reading does not consist in ease of apprehension; if so, children's books would drive all others from the market. On the other hand, this ease does not always measure the cost of writing what is comprehended or its value. No reader of Lowell can fail to see that the spoils of all the empires have been brought together, and that they are at the service of any one who can bring to their inspection sufficient information to appreciate their worth. It is like appraising oriental fabrics. Such an one will be likely to carry away more than he brings.

A passage out of his "Study of Modern Languages" is a fair example of his easy familiarity with ancient and modern literatures as well as of his large-mindedness:

"You all remember Du Bellay's eloquent protest, 'I cannot sufficiently blame the foolish arrogance and temerity of some of our nation, who, being least of all Greeks or Latins, depreciate and reject with a more than Stoic brow everything written in French.' When this was said, Montaigne was already sixteen years old, and France had produced in Rabelais a great humorist and strangely open-eyed thinker, and in Villon a poet who had written at least one immortal poem, the burden of which falters and fades away like the last stroke of Beauty's passing-bell. I must not let you forget that Du Bellay had formed himself on the classics, and that he insists on the assiduous study of them. 'Devour them,' he says, 'not in order to imitate, but to turn them into blood and nutriment.' And surely this always has been and always will be their true use. . . .

"It is instructive that, only fifty years after Du Bellay wrote

the passage I have quoted, Bishop Hall was indirectly praising Sydney for having learned in France and brought back with him to England that very specialty of culture which we are told can only be got in ancient Greece, or, at second hand in ancient Rome. And did not Spenser form himself on French and Italian models? Did not Chaucer and Gower, the shapers of our tongue, draw from the same sources?

"What I would urge, therefore, is that no invidious distinction be made between the Old Learning and the New, but that students, due regard being had to their temperaments and faculties, should be encouraged to take the course in modern languages as being quite as good in point of mental discipline as any other, if pursued with the same thoroughness and to the same end. And that end is Literature, for there language first attains to full consciousness of its powers and to the delighted exercise of them. And has no page been added to it since the last ancient classic author laid down his pen?"

Where there is such wealth of resource, diversity of mood, and even variety of style it seems impertinent to take a page from a dozen volumes to represent so versatile a writer. As many pages would be required to give a glimpse of his many sides. One or two more of them only can be afforded; the first as bearing upon the present movement toward a literary metropolis; — the second will explain itself as another kind of movement.

"The want of a focus of intellectual, political, and material activity has had more to do with the backwardness and provincialism of our literature than is generally taken into account. I make bold to doubt whether national consciousness will ever pour itself into and reinforce the individual consciousness in a way to make our literature feel itself of age and its own master, till we shall have got a common head as well as a common body. It is not the size of a city that gives it this stimulating and expanding quality, but the fact that it sums up and gathers all

the moral and intellectual forces of a country in a single focus. London is still the metropolis of the British as Paris of the French race. We admit this readily enough as regards Australia or Canada, but we willingly overlook it as regards ourselves. Washington is growing more national and more habitable every year, but it will never be a capital till every kind of culture is attainable there on as good terms as elsewhere. Why not better than elsewhere? We are rich enough. Bismarck's first care has been the Museums of Berlin. For a fiftieth part of the money Congress seems willing to waste in demoralizing the country, we might have had the Hamilton books and the far more precious Ashburnham manuscripts. Whatever place can draw together the greatest amount and the greatest variety of intellect and character, the most abundant elements of civilization, performs the best function of a university. London was such a centre in the days of Queen Elizabeth. And think what a school the Mermaid Tavern must have been!"

And this in another vein:

"The sea was meant to be looked at from shore, as mountains are from the plain. Lucretius made this discovery long ago and was blunt enough to blurt it forth, romance and sentiment — in other words, the pretence of feeling what we do not feel — being inventions of a later day. I rather think Petrarch was the first choragus of that sentimental dance which so long led young folks away from the realities of life like the Piper of Hamelin, and whose succession ended, let us hope, with Chateaubriand. I know nothing so tedious at once and so exasperating as that regular slap of the wilted sails when the ship rises and falls with the slow breathing of the sleeping sea, one greasy, brassy swell following another, slow, smooth, unmitigable as the series of Wordsworth's 'Ecclesiastical Sonnets.' Fancy an existence in which the coming up of a clumsy finback whale, who says *Pook!* to you solemnly as you lean over the taffrail, is an event as exciting as an election on shore! The dampness seems to strike into the wits as into lucifer matches, so that one may

scratch a thought half a dozen times and get nothing at last but a faint sputter. I have seen men driven to five meals a day for mental occupation. I sometimes sit and pity Noah; but even he had this advantage over all succeeding navigators, that, wherever he landed, he was sure to get no ill news from home. He should be canonized as the patron saint of newspaper correspondents, being the only man who ever had the very last authentic news from everywhere."

XXVIII

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

THE survivor of what may be called the Cambridge group of writers had, like the others, his distinctive personality and his own acre which he cultivated. The last, geographically considered, was situated somewhere on a line drawn from the State House to Harvard College through Beacon street. It was always in the greater Boston, to him the centre of the universe. Intellectually the plat which he worked over was of similiar extent, but wonderfully productive. People of the provincial town — as distinguished from Lowell's back-countrymen, — ideas of a reactionary period to be smiled at, with the exception of the liberal movement in religion, combined with certain professional theories, made up the possibilities of his output. His chief opportunities were successive numbers of the "Atlantic Monthly," to which he gave the name, and anniversary celebrations at Harvard.

He may be said to have been born for these last occasions, since on Commencement Day, 1809, his father, Rev. Abiel Holmes, wrote in his almanac opposite Aug. 29, "Son b.," and sprinkling sand Ancestry. upon the ink probably started for the "exercises," which were in those days of greater interest to city and country than an ordination or a circus of the period. He was a man of renown, son-in-law and biographer of President Stiles of Yale and author of the "Annals of America,"

besides being pastor of the first parish in Cambridge, notwithstanding his New Haven education. Son Oliver Wendell would have dwelt longer on his descent from the fine old families represented by these two names than can be done here, for it was one of the cardinal points of his belief that a man should be very careful in selecting his ancestors. His own were the best that New England could furnish.

It was inevitable that the boy of sixteen should enter Harvard, and from a rhyming tendency already shown that he should deliver poems before the Hasty

Early Verse.

Pudding Club at junior exhibition and at the Commencement of 1829. His first printed collection of verse, written while a law student, is called "Runaway Ballads," possibly from one on a proposed elopement, which contains this:

"Get up! get up! Miss Polly Jones, the tandem's at the door;
Get up and shake your lovely bones, it's twelve o'clock and more;
The chaises they have rattled by and nothing stirs around,
And all the world but you and me are snoring safe and sound."

But at this date he could also write something as good as "Old Ironsides," and thus foreshow the twofold direction in which his poetic gift would win its triumphs. As a testimony to the practical value of his early verse it should be added, that this burst of reverent patriotism inspired the universal protest which saved the old "Constitution" from being broken up.

Holmes found the study of medicine, for which he had abandoned that of the law, still less congenial to the poetic muse, notwithstanding two years of study and travel in Europe. Nothing that he saw there made him forget his beloved Boston, to which he

Occasional Poetry.

returned in 1835 to take his degree as a poet by reading at Harvard the next year a long poem entitled "Poetry, a Metrical Essay," the first of over fifty which he delivered on similar occasions during his life. He was preëminently the poet of occasion — celebrations, anniversaries, and public festivals. He was always ready and good-natured, being at length beyond the unpoetical suggestions of the dissecting-room or at least accustomed to them. It was in the days of the "Autocrat" that he remarks: "My friend the poet tells me he has to leave town whenever the anniversaries come round. What's the difficulty? Why, they all want him to get up and make speeches or songs or toasts, which is just the very thing he doesn't want to do. But they tease him and coax him and by pressure on the weak spot of his head stupefy him to the point of acquiescence." And then he explains how the poet goes into his garden and pulls up a handful of violets and weeds with the earth sticking to them, which is his idea of a postprandial performance of which this is the first stanza of an example:

" Brave singer of the coming time,
 Sweet minstrel of the joyous present,
 Crowned with the noblest wreath of rhyme,
 The holly leaf of Ayshire peasant,
 Good-by! Good-by! Our hearts and hands,
 Our lips in honest Saxon phrases,
 Cry, God be with him till he stands
 His feet among the English daisies! "

Holmes always had the rare talent of writing in his library just what would fit the after-dinner mood of the company. There was champagne in his brain. He says himself: "Song intoxicates the poet. His brain rings with it for hours or days or weeks after it has chimed itself

through his consciousness." But it is not every versifier who can attain the exactly proper degree of inebriety the day before dinner, as this poet could.

The extent of his possible effervescence is indicated by examples with which his readers are familiar. Each one will recall his favorite, and every one "The Humor. One-Hoss Shay," and "How the Old Horse Won the Bet," both of which betray Cavalier blood from some remote knight, or possibly from a nearer judge of horseflesh. And with the moral of the last always in mind that "A horse can trot for all he's old," he makes many a happy hit in the offerings which he brought to the narrowing circle of his classmates as they met year by year. Age could not dull the cheerful humor with which he met its steady advance. The "Class Poems" for thirty-eight years, from "Bill and Joe" in '51 to "After the Curfew" in '89, are bright with reminiscence and hopes.

"So ends 'The Boys,' a lifelong play,
We too must hear the prompter's call
To fairer scenes and brighter day,
Farewell ! I let the curtain fall."

Beyond all the wit and humor of his verse was the pathos which is their nearest neighbor in exalted characters. It is not always possible for dull spirits Pathos. to distinguish between buoyancy and levity any more than between irony and sarcasm, humor and wit. Even a book of synonyms does not help their perceptive faculties. But the dullest know the difference between laughter and tears, and this writer knew how to move his hearers and readers to the one or the other at will. This, too, without pretence of art or purpose. He

simply spoke out the suggestions of an April heart, with its sunshine and showers, restraining neither its gladness nor its gloom. The total effect, however, is as the joy of springtime and not the melancholy of autumn. Let those who are growing old read "In the Twilight":

"Not bedtime yet! The full-blown flower
Of all the year — this evening hour —
With friendship's flame is bright;
Life still is sweet, the heavens are fair,
Though fields are brown and woods are bare,
And many a joy is left to share
Before we say good-night!

"And when, our cheerful evening past,
The nurse, long waiting, comes at last,
Ere on her lap we lie
In wearied nature's sweet repose,
At peace with all her waking foes,
Our lips shall murmur ere they close,
Good-night! and not good-by!"

Holmes' verse is by no means confined to poems of sentiment. The title to those written between '49 and '65 — "Songs in Many Keys" — might be pre-
fixed to the entire collection in two goodly vol-
umes. They range from the ploughman to the warrior, from Maid Agnes to St. Anthony, from Avis to the Old Man of the Sea, from Parson Turrell to Shakespeare. There are songs of life and labor, of present and departed days, of festival and funeral, of greeting and farewell, of times and seasons, of peace and war. Those labelled "In War Time" are characteristic of this poet, as Whittier's and Longfellow's and Lowell's were of the way each one interpreted its message to the nation. The manner in which different people and parties received the call to arms is

Range.

clearly stated in his "Thus saith the Lord;" in "Never or Now," an equally clear summons to fill up the ranks; in "One Country," the better sentiment which finally prevailed from the lakes to the gulf. Through them all loyalty to the flag, to union, and liberty runs in unmistakable strain, of which this stanza of the "Army Hymn" is an example:

"Wake in our hearts the living fires,
The holy faith that warmed our sires;
Thy hand hath made our nation free;
To die for her is serving thee."

In "The Temple," "The Last Leaf," and "The Chambered Nautilus" the poet reaches the loftiest height which he attained in verse, culminating in the final stanza of the last poem:

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!"

There is much said about the dead line of fifty, after crossing which a man's comfort in his work must be chiefly in looking backward. Holmes was within one step of this supposed Arctic circle when he began the "Autocrat" papers once more, after an interruption of twenty-five years, "to see if the ripe fruit were better or worse than the early windfalls." He found it so much better that he would never allow those two early papers in the "New England Magazine" to be reprinted. How good the rest of the reading world found

"The Autocrat."

the entire "Breakfast Table Series" is a matter of literary history connected with the immediate success of the "Atlantic Monthly" in the hard times of 1857 and later. Those who lived in those years felt that in spite of financial straits it was time for New England to laugh. It had not indulged in a general smile for two hundred and forty years. One morning a genial man invited himself to breakfast with a typical family of boarders, and began to tell them how provincial they had been keeping themselves through all the generations. This is what he told them about their literary appetite:

"These United States furnish the greatest market for intellectual *green fruit* of all the places in the world. I think so, at any rate. The demand for intellectual labor is so enormous and the market so far from nice, that young talent is apt to fare like unripe gooseberries, — get plucked to make a fool of. Think of a country which buys eighty thousand copies of the 'Proverbial Philosophy,' while the author's admiring countrymen have been buying twelve thousand! How can one let his fruit hang in the sun until it gets fully ripe while there are eighty thousand such hungry mouths ready to swallow it and proclaim its praises? Consequently, there never was such a collection of crude pippins and half-grown windfalls as our native literature displays among its fruits."

Of course, readers winced, but they also profited by his observations. Besides, he told them many other and pleasanter things which he had noted. In fact, one might suppose that the "Autocrat" took the note-books in which he had been jotting down the best thoughts that had come to him in a quarter of a century and strung them upon the slightest thread of a story without much change in their form. The very dashes which precede the paragraphs are such as would be made in a note-book before

each disconnected section. Then the bracketed comments on his own remarks show the added material as plainly as the newly constructed dialogue. But it is all delightful. No such table-talk had appeared since the days of Hazlitt and Coleridge, "The Shepherd" and "Christopher North," and theirs was not like this. Even the personal conceit is pleasant in a talker who is his own Boswell.

"You don't suppose that my remarks made at this table are like so many postage stamps, do you — each to be only once uttered? If you do you are mistaken. He must be a poor creature that does not often repeat himself. Imagine the author of that excellent piece of advice, 'Know thyself,' never alluding to that sentiment again during the course of a protracted existence! Why, the truths a man carries about with him are his tools, and do you think a carpenter is bound to use the same plane but once? I shall never repeat a conversation, but an idea often."

If one should permit himself to quote a second paragraph he would not know where to stop. The richness of wisdom, the felicity of phrase, the amusing conceits, the sprightly humor, and the constant relief of change draw readers on as nothing can outside of a fascinating romance. The characters which he created for fellow boarders are of the kind to give point and direction to his talk. The landlady and her daughter, the boy called John, B. F., the old gentleman opposite, the ancient maiden, the divinity student, and himself in the guise of professor and poet make up a group fit for a society novel, with the school-mistress and the chief speaker to furnish the sentiment. No wonder that the subscription list of the "Atlantic Monthly" lengthened amazingly after the first breakfast of this remarkable company. To be sure, there were dogmatic

things said there which staggered readers in the "rural districts" and caused sundry denominational journals to say plainly what they regarded as the final destination of the unorthodox author, but this only made their readers curious to know what he had said, and so the demand for his talk increased with each issue. This was one of the alarming paragraphs :

"Insanity is often the logic of an accurate mind overtaken. Good mental machinery ought to break its own wheels and levers, if anything is thrust among them suddenly which tends to stop them or reverse their motion. A weak mind does not accumulate force enough to hurt itself; stupidity often saves a man from going mad. We frequently see persons in insane hospitals, sent there in consequence of what are called *religious* mental disturbances. I confess that I think better of them than of many who hold the same notions, and keep their wits and appear to enjoy life well outside of the asylums. Any decent person ought to go mad, if he really holds such or such opinions. It is very much to his discredit if he does not. What is the use of saying what some of these opinions are? Perhaps more than one of you hold such as I should think ought to send you straight over to Somerville, if you have any logic in your heads or any human feeling in your hearts. Anything that is brutal, cruel, heathenish, that makes life hopeless for the most of mankind and perhaps for entire races, — anything that assumes the extermination of instincts which were given to be regulated, — no matter by what name you call it, — no matter whether a fakir, or a monk, or a deacon believes it, — if received, ought to produce insanity in every well regulated mind."

When the series was finished the demand for more continued. Accordingly a second, and after a while a third followed under the titles of "The

The "Professor" and "Poet."

"Professor" and "The Poet at the Breakfast Table." Of these the author himself said that they were

like the successive squeezings of the vintage, but some, like Lowell, preferred the second run to the first. The third had the advantage of some years' interval between it and the preceding one.

So much cannot be said for his novels, which were the experiments of a professional in the line of his profession to illustrate theories of transmission and heredity. "Elsie Venner" has the kind of charm that is supposed to belong to the eye of a serpent. "The Guardian Angel" interests by its portrayal of provincial traits, and the "Mortal Antipathy" does not add to his renown. Better are his biographies of Motley and Emerson, works of sympathetic and keen appreciation. But the hurried reader will turn first to the earlier writings of the Professor and Poet in his chair at the Breakfast Table, where he is at his best and supreme.

The entire series may be regarded as similar brands from the same choice vine which had its roots close by the fountains of wisdom and its branches spread to the sunlight of heaven. The warmth of a genial spirit is in them, sparkling with vivacious wit and cheerful humor, stimulating to other minds, and steadying them withal by its sane intelligence. It is the rarefied common sense of the refined American, alert and discreet, deft and graceful, thoughtful and conservative. His eye was keen for the vulnerable spot and the weak one. Physician for the spirit as well as the body, for the soul cramps which New England had inherited with its rheumatism, he knew that laughter at its own infirmities would give it a wholesome shaking up, even if accompanied with shrieks of protestation. His hatred of Calvinism and homœopathy sometimes made "Physician, heal thyself" an appropriate

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rejoinder, but he took much cant and nonsense out of the age, and taught the difference between good taste and poor in life and letters, between pretence and reality, honesty and dishonesty, affectation and sincerity, a little knowledge and profound wisdom. This he accomplished in the genuine kindness of a gracious disposition, which was humorous without bitterness and witty without malice; whose pathos never descended into bathos, having always in it the elements of cheerfulness and of hope. Accordingly his place is among the bright and happy spirits in literature to whom we turn when we wish to listen to revelations of personality like those of Montaigne and Pepys and "Kit North," or to be reminded of talk and tables at the Mermaid Tavern, at Will's Coffee House, at Button's, at Ambrose's, and at Essex Head.

XXIX

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

IN an age of high civilization a tendency is often detected to break loose from its restraints and to return to primitive simplicity of living. This reversion **Primitive** to primeval types is accomplished in the ordi-
Inclinations. nary citizen's instance by "taking to the woods" for a few weeks in summer. He usually gets enough of the dry and wet side of nature to last him for the remainder of the year — sometimes longer. Or if not, he satisfies himself and his family by the experience of the gentleman farmer on a country estate not too far from town. In both these cases, however, the divorce from custom is partial and generally brief. Canned delicacies follow the sportsman into the remotest wilds, and the self-rusticated tradesman hitches himself to a telephone wire and listens to the hum of the city. Now and then at long intervals an aboriginal man is reproduced who harks back to pristine methods for so long as the encroachments of civilized life permit. He used to go by the honored name of hermit; then as a recluse, now as an odd stick, a crank, or a solitary.

The last man of consequence to set up this secluded style of housekeeping was Thoreau, born in the philosophers' town of old Concord, Massachusetts, as most of these, Emerson included, were not. By the strictest economies his family helped him through Harvard, where

he devoted himself to such studies as pleased him best. After graduation he earned a bare living by surveying, gardening, and fence building, contriving always to get half of each day off to search fields and streams and woods for any new or old word which nature had to say to him. In this way he became a practical naturalist without troubling himself with the scientific side of research, as he had always been a lover of nature's common ways, seeing in them a hundred things which he fancied that most men do not observe. In this he was frequently mistaken, as in other things, where he supposed himself to be the original discoverer. However, his own observation was always as good to him as a first-class discovery, and he made the most of it. A great part of his charm as a writer is the naïve simplicity with which he describes things as new that several other observers were already familiar with. But there are so many who have not observed them, and others still who would rather read about them than get their feet wet in finding them, that Thoreau will continue to be the best naturalist for readers at home. For as next to going a-fishing is to read Izaak Walton, so a pleasanter diversion than to follow in Thoreau's tracks through thick and thin is to read how he made them and to hear him tell what he saw, even if one has seen it himself.

In 1845, at the age of twenty-eight, he built for himself a hut on a piece of woodland owned by Emerson on the edge of Walden pond. There he stayed as alone as his curious friends would permit for two years or over, "to live deliberately and to front only the essential facts of life and transact some private business," as he said; that is, to write his book entitled "A Week on the Concord

and Merrimac Rivers." Incidentally he also gathered material for "Walden," the other volume which was published in his lifetime. After his death friends collected other writings of his, amounting to nine volumes more. But the two first will appeal to readers as having the stamp of his own approval and consent to publish. Of these "The Week" is an account of such a boating excursion as any boy under fifty might be glad to make with brother or comrade on a stream running past his home. The log book of the voyage states that these two mariners weighed anchor on Saturday, a favorite day for embarking before and since the last day of August, 1839. Their fifteen-foot dory, which had already cost them a week's labor in the spring, was painted green below with a border of blue, "with reference to the two elements in which it was to spend its existence." It was also provided with wheels for transportation around falls. As became vegetarians, it was provisioned with potatoes and melons and furnished with cooking utensils.

Enough has been said of this amphibious craft to bait the ordinary youth on to reading the first chapter or two, after which he can be counted on to finish the week. Before he gets to Friday evening he will be surprised at what is stowed away in four hundred and fourteen pages. It will show him how an artist with the pen, having knowledge and fancy, can people an everyday stream with shapes from the past, as of the soldiers and farmers who fought the first battle of the Revolution at North Bridge on this river, or with classic phantasies from old world myths. More interesting than either are Indian traditions, the beginnings of colonial life, and the struggle between two races for the supremacy of a continent. Here was

the circle of burnt stones once the centre of a wigwam, and there the chips of quartz which an arrow-maker had left, and yonder the grave of a settler slain in his own cabin. In the midst of these tokens of border life and warfare and the story of them are interspersed bits of wisdom from what the author pretentiously terms the Bibles of the nations, from Homer, the Padma-Purana, and the Bhagavad-gita. It is this remote and foreign lore which betrays the writing under a roof, while the notes on the river and the weather, on fin and fur, might have been written for their naturalness and fidelity in the boat itself. This was his true sphere of observation and thought. When he ventures into theology, even on Sunday, he is at disadvantage. Readers will prefer his portraiture of the river-men and the farmers along the banks, of the flat-boat commerce upstream and down before the railway came, and of all the shy life of bird and beast and man on the margin of the wilderness. Here is a sample from the middle of the book and voyage:

“The small houses which were scattered along the river at intervals of a mile or more were commonly out of sight to us, but sometimes, when we rowed near the shore, we heard the note of a peevish hen or some slight domestic sound which betrayed them. High in the leafy bank, surrounded commonly by a small patch of corn or beans, squashes and melons and some running vine over the windows, they appeared like beehives set to gather honey for a summer. I have not read of any Arcadian life which surpasses the actual luxury and serenity of those New England dwellings. As you approach the sunny doorway there is no sound from these barracks of repose, and you fear that the gentlest knock may seem rude to the oriental dreamers.”

Equally interesting is the account of his two years and two months' stay in the shanty by a pond, where he also wrote the bulk of "Walden; or, Life in the Woods." The entire book is the protest of a single man against what he considers the unnecessary and self-imposed burdens of ordinary life. Even of his plain former townsmen he says:

"How many a poor immortal soul have I met well-nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn 75 feet by 40 and 100 acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture, and wood lot! It is a fool's life, as they will find when they get to the end of it, if not before."

Accordingly, he attempts to show them how to live on nine cents a day.

Some have not failed to point out that he did this by the direct or indirect assistance of those very fellow men of whom he pretended to be independent. Others have suggested that if a man chooses to live like a woodchuck, he runs the risk of becoming like that animal in many respects. Probably the truth is, that if he has lived forty years of his life like other men, two years of aboriginal existence will not greatly harm him if he can stand it. Especially if he has books for evening companions and a pen to drive in the hours spared him by inquisitive callers. Certainly Thoreau could not have had many unemployed days, to turn off two volumes in two years after frying his potatoes and washing his dishes. It was all very interesting to him, and he has made it charming for readers to follow his account of it, if not his example.

He could be rich on ten cents a day because he had reduced his necessities to nine. He was the modern counterpart of that philosopher who, witnessing a Roman

triumph, exclaimed: "How many things there are which I do not want!"

After a chapter on economy and shelter he says: "Near the end of March 1845, I borrowed an ax and went down to the woods by Walden Pond and began to cut some white pines for timber." He admits that it is hard to begin life without borrowing, but does not mention that the land on which he built was borrowed as well as the ax and the pine trees. The boards were bought of an Irish laborer who had worked on the railroad and was quitting his shanty. After the Fourth of July, by the assistance of neighbors at a "raising," he was able to declare his independence of society and begin his Robinson Crusoe life fully a mile from town. It was a good and safe place to descant upon the failures and foibles of communities, since he could reach the store and the postoffice by an easy walk. For the Church he professed to have no need, and it would not have known what to do with him fifty years ago. A chapter on architecture is suggested by his simple efforts in that direction, which had resulted in "a tight shingled and plastered house, ten feet wide, fifteen feet long, and eight feet posts, with a garret and a closet, a large window on each side, two trapdoors, one door at the end, and a brick fireplace opposite," at a total cost, exclusive of his own labor, of twenty-eight dollars, twelve and one-half cents. Then follows the account of his daily fare at a cost of twenty-seven cents a week, another study in economics and dietetics which may be commended to persons having strong constitutions and a simple appetite. Rice he could devour in abundance "because he loved so well the philosophy of India," but it must have been a Yankee taste that helped down "rye

and Indian meal without yeast, potatoes, a very little salt pork, molasses, salt, and my drink-water."

It is not improbable that the epidemic transcendental philosophy, of which he had an attack, was at the bottom of his hermit life, as it was of the Brook Farm community experiment a few miles away in Roxbury. From a few kindred spirits trying to live in unity it was but a step to a single bachelor's attempt to establish the new kingdom of separatism all by himself. It was the logic of the forefathers reduced to the absurd, and the triumph of independency—for twenty-six months. Both experiments were failures, and a return to common sense and the town followed. Thoreau had succeeded in showing that one can camp for over two years not far from a country store, and that he himself could meet all the expenses of living by working six weeks in a year; but his greater success was in telling of the incidental advantages and disadvantages. Even his first book did not add to his income, nearly the whole edition being returned unsold. Upon this incident he wrote philosophically: "I have now a library of nine hundred volumes, seven hundred of which I wrote myself." But his day of recognition came with the appreciative generation which followed his own. He had taken great pains to say what he knew in a clear and entertaining manner. Much time was at his command; he was industrious and patient. That was a part of one-half. The other was the indeterminable quantity of a native talent which does not always go with leisure and diligence and ambition. The chapter on "Reading" in this very book shows what the writer of it thought of absorption and production. In that on "Sounds" another natural gift of observation is revealed;

in "Solitude" the capacity to fraternize with nature in all its manifestations.

"There can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the midst of nature and has his senses still. While I enjoy the friendship of the seasons I trust nothing can make life a burden to me. I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating. We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers. A man thinking or working is always alone, let him be where he will. The really diligent student in one of the crowded hives of Cambridge college is as solitary as a dervish in the desert. Society is commonly too cheap. We meet at very short intervals, not having had time to acquire any new value for each other. We meet at meals three times a day and give each other a taste of that old musty cheese that we are. Less frequency would suffice for all important and hearty communications."

Apart from his theories of social life, which are half-truths, there are views of animal and bird and elemental life which none will dispute and many enjoy. All his books are an education in those things which are near but not always clear to the unobservant. They are not discerned because always visible. In a double sense the wood is not seen for the trees. It is the unusual tree only that catches the common eye. All the rest constitute the uniformity and blur of the forest.

This man's business was to say "Stop and see what you are stumbling over unheeded." Above all, he calls attention to unsuspected relations between the higher and lower forms of nature, the sand leaves to foliage, and the tree leaf to the palm of the human hand, the hillside to the face. Spring is an unceasing miracle of revival and

growth, winter of sleep and rest, and all the year a revelation. But in these obvious phenomena he finds unobserved byplay.

“I heard the whooping of the ice in the pond, my great bed-fellow, as if it were restless and would fain turn over. Sometimes I heard the foxes barking as if struggling for light and to be dogs and run freely in the streets; for may there not be civilization going on among brutes as well as men?”

It is this intimacy with the finer and more distant voices of nature which makes him its skilled interpreter. He reads its cipher language, which is unintelligible to the man of the pavement; he finds a sign as the Indian discovers a trail by a broken twig. He sees every bird or beast that had gone over the snow in the tracks it left. And they all were on friendly terms with him.

He understood men as well, although not fond of a crowd. Congenial companions were few for a man with truthful words and blunt speech and a certain dominating air of assumed superiority to conventionalities. His friend said: “I love Henry, but I cannot like him, and as for taking his arm I would as soon take the branch of an elm tree.”

Altogether he has made a better impression, or at least a more pleasing, by his books than by his life, sincere and upright, truthful, and, in a way, religious as it was. Readers will go with him in his “Excursions” who might not have enjoyed his company. He will take them even now as in a guide book to Cape Cod and to Canada and the Maine woods in the volumes bearing these titles. And in four others named for the seasons he will lead them through unsuspected phases of nature in Massachusetts.

Such a man must be a poet, and this one wrote verse, but his prose poems will be preferred by most readers. He himself confessed :

“It is no dream of mine
To ornament a line.”

and the man who has not this ambition does best in the unrhymed, unmeasured, but not necessarily unrhythmic sentence of prose.

The following, from “House-Warming,” is as good as his best:

“Light-winged smoke, Icarian bird,
Melting thy pinions in thy upward flight,
Lark without song and messenger of dawn
Circling above the hamlets is thy nest ;
By night star-veiling and by day
Darkening the light and blotting out the sun,
Go thou, my incense, upward from this hearth,
And ask the gods to pardon this clear flame.”

This is in the midst of an instructive paragraph on the best kinds of firewood. It is like all the rest of his writing, a singular mixture of common sense and poetic imagination, with a keen appreciation of truth and beauty and of the mystery hidden by the highways or in the byways of nature.

XXX

WALT WHITMAN

IF Thoreau was eccentric in his aboriginal experiments, Walt Whitman earned a similar distinction by his disregard of literary conventionalities. Interest in either departure from customary forms may be sympathetic or otherwise, and in the instance of books which have an attractive or repellent character doughty defenders and strenuous remonstrants will spring up, with many neutrals or indifferents between. That this has been Whitman's fortune is notorious. Seldom has a writer won such adulation or provoked such scorn. With these has gone a corresponding contempt of each extreme party in the controversy for the other and consequent imputation of ignorance, want of taste, and lack of appreciation for what is best and truest, according to the standards of each.

Whitman was born at West Hills, Long Island, in 1819, the year that steamers ventured across the Atlantic.

Literary Independence. Byron was sending out "Don Juan" and "Mazeppa" while in America the "Bucktail Bards" appeared; also the "Sketch-Book," a more hopeful sign. Walt, — for so he chose to be called in distinction from his father, Walter the carpenter, — went to school, shoved a plane, set type, taught urchins, edited newspapers, tramped westward, served in many hospitals and later in government departments. When young he wrote verses in the rhymes and metres that other youthful poets had

employed, with the lack of applause which befalls those who treat commonplace topics in a hackneyed manner. At length it occurred to him to shuffle off what Emerson called "the coil of rhythm and number" and practise an untrammelled style suited to the largeness and freedom of the nation. Other writers had felt the inspirations of democracy and had protested against bondage to foreign masters ; but this man cried out against all precedents and broke forth :

" From this hour freedom !

From this hour I ordain myself loosed from limits and imaginary
lines,

Gently, but with undeniable will divesting myself of the holds
that would hold me."

This declaration of independence was carried out in the construction of his verse and in its subject-matter. Rhyme was discarded as an artificiality. In this, however, as every one knows, he was not without exemplars in English poetry from "Beowulf" to "Ossian," and from "Paradise Lost" to the "Proverbial Philosophy" of Tupper. Moreover, had not Milton said : "The neglect of rhyme, so little is it to be taken for a defect, tho' it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it is rather to be esteemed an example of ancient liberty, recovered from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhiming." This certainly was an authority eminent enough for James Ralph, Franklin's crony, to follow in poems which Pope immortalized in "The Dunciad ;" and there are other and better names to which Whitman might have appealed, Cotton Mather among the rest, as defenders of rhymeless lines. It must be left to an obscure versifier like James Branston to champion the other side for Milton's "vulgar readers" in

lines on the "Man of Taste," if he did not justify it by a shining example :

"Verse without rhyme I could never endure,
Uncouth in numbers, and in sense obscure.
Rhyme is the poet's pride and people's choice,
Confirmed and settled by the nation's voice."

Still, some better poets have employed rhyme advantageously, also metre. In discarding this, Whitman had not so many precedents, but these were of not much account to him. It was an affectation like alliteration, he thought, to carry the wave-law into poetry, which should be a thing larger and freer than words cut to measure and set to accent and time. If it were rhythmical, he was satisfied, and sometimes this bottle was too old to hold his new wine. Then he would say what he pleased as he pleased, and trust to his ideas and his fervor to furnish the poetic element. Here, of course, is the ground of controversy among literary critics, each one of whom may have a separate definition of poetry and its limits. Where is the dividing line between rhythmical prose—like some of Ruskin's, Newman's, and Burke's, or some of Dickens' metrical sentences—and verses having rhythm with irregular length? Possibly the boundaries should be extended to include whatever is poetic in feeling and idea, regardless of form. This is what Whitman would have demanded as the test to be applied to his own verse, and an increasing number of admirers are willing to accede to his claim. One of these goes so far as to say :

"Whitman is the Wagner of poets. As Wagner abandoned the cadences of the old sonatas and symphonies, so Whitman has abandoned the measured beat of the old rhymed see-saw poetry. With him poetry has become an instrument breathing music in

so vast a key that the solitary wheelings and solemn pomp of Milton's verse seem rather formal and mechanical. In the matter of orchestral word-music Whitman, in his rhythmic chants does at any rate more than any mortal has yet accomplished."

He does it in this way in one of his "Chants Democratic," the fourteenth — a fair sample of the series:

1. "Poets to come!

Not to-day is to justify me, and Democracy, and what we are for,
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater than
before known,
You must justify me.

4. "Of to-day I know I am momentary, untouched — I am the
bard of the future,
I but write one or two indicative words of the future,
I but advance a moment, only to wheel and hurry back in the
darkness."

And in the chant "Walt Whitman":

"I am the poet of the Body;
And I am poet of the Soul."

"The pleasures of heaven are with me, and the pains of hell are with
me;
The first I graft and increase upon myself — the latter I translate
into a new tongue."

But five years later comes a contrasting strain:

"As I wend to the shores I know not,
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women wreck'd,
As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me,
As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and closer,
I, too, but signify, at the utmost, a little wash'd up drift,
A few sands and dead leaves to gather,
Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift."

In the midst of rhythmic verses a prosy thought sometimes strikes him, or one too complicated for an ordinary line, or below the dignified level of the context. Then

down it goes in a prose sentence after the manner of Elizabethan poets when they had anything common or unclean to introduce into better company; but with this difference that to Whitman one style and one thing is as good as another:

“And I will thread a thread through my poems that no one thing in the universe is inferior to another thing,
And that all things of the universe are perfect miracles, each as profound as any.”

Accordingly it is to be expected, on his own theory of verse and the universe, that he should sometimes flat in a prosy sentiment and sentence and add:

“And that I grew six feet high, and that I have become a man thirty-six years old in the year 79 of America—and that I am here anyhow—all are equally wonderful.”

Still more wonderful it is when he goes into details about himself as representing democracy and mankind.

**Sympathy
with
Humanity.** In more senses than to the Roman poet nothing human was alien to Walt Whitman. The inevitable naturalistic element of course raised a dust of criticism greater even than that stirred up by his poetic style, but there is no need to disturb it afresh. People are learning to look through the cloud to find elemental virtues which it is apt to obscure.

The first of these is his sympathy with his fellow men—the aristocrat, however, least of all—in his lifetime. But by a singular irony of literary fate this is the class which discovered the good points that were not revealed to the commonalty with whom he loved to rub elbows. For the masses he had a genuine liking, for the roughest and grimmest of them, with all their common ambitions and

interests, pleasures and appetites, and he is never tired of saying:

“ I am in love with you, and with all my fellows upon the earth.
 O you robust, sacred !
 I cannot tell you how I love you ;
 All I love America for, is contained in men and women like you.”

And then, lest any should be excluded, he specifies the men and women of all trades and occupations in all the States and Canada, even “ in China, Russia, or India — talking other dialects ”:

“ And it seems to me if I could know those men, I should become attached to them, as I do to men in my own lands.”

That this was not altogether sentiment may be shown by his hospital service during the war for ten thousand sick and wounded soldiers, through devotion to whom he lost his splendid vigor of health and strength and became an invalid for the remaining twenty years of his life, but without repining or complaint. And for an everyday sympathy and companionship in ordinary life the plain record of it tallies fairly with its poetic counterpart, of which this is an example:

“ To any one dying, thither I speed and twist the knob of the door.

 I seize the descending man and raise him with resistless will,
 O despairer, here is my neck,
 You shall not go down ! hang your whole weight upon me.
 I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up,
 Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd force,
 Lovers of me, bafflers of graves.”

This “ any one ” might be any man in the throng as much as a particular friend, a disposition which suggests mention of a second quality in his verse, which may be

termed the comprehensiveness of his interest, whose most apparent expression is his Americanism, and its best phase, patriotism. After his comrade, "These States," as

His

Americanism.

one nation, are the subject of his nobler song. His European admirers must gulp large doses of republicanism with elements which they relish better. But Whitman was not a man to sweeten medicine to any one's taste or to lower his voice in distinguished company. "I sound my yawp over the roofs of the world," and it was never so loud and far-carrying as when the land he loved was in his thoughts. In his "Native American Chants" after three pages of apostrophe he announces :

"What WE ARE — nativity is answer enough to objections;
 We wield ourselves as a weapon is wielded,
 Ages, precedents, poems, have long been accumulating undirected
 materials,
 America brings builders, and brings its own styles.
 Stands removed, spacious, composite, sound.
 Here is not merely a nation, but a teeming nation of nations."

Nor is he far from a great and vital truth when he resolves the vastness of territory and population into its atoms and makes the virtue of the individual the salt of the earth :

"It is not the earth, it is not America, who is so great,
 It is I who am great, or to be great — it is you, or any one.
 — this America is only you and me,
 Its power, weapons, testimony, are you and me.
 The Many In One — what is it finally except myself ?
 These States — what are they except myself ?"

His making himself the representative of humanity and democracy has sometimes been mistaken for egotism, not without reason, however, since modesty was not one of his literary characteristics. But there are places where he is

the personal Walt, and others where he is the impersonal man.

There are other qualities in this diversely interpreted poet which can best be accounted for by saying that he was oriental in temperament and occidental in manner. Both phases crop out in his verse. Dual
Nature.

In its form there is an adaptation of the line to the complexity of the thought, as in an Arabian improvisation or a Hebrew psalm, with similar lack of metre and rhyme, — chants, as Whitman calls his irregular verses. Incorporated with them is an Eastern disposition, with a corresponding unrestraint of imagination and language. On the other side and often alternating with such lines, springs up a positive and aggressive Western temper, outspoken, audacious, and arrogant; but also frank, honest, and kindly, open-hearted and full of faith in men, the native land, and the future of both. This dual nature thus becomes the most reasonable ground of his assertion that he is a cosmic poet with sympathies wide enough to embrace the world:

“I am the chanter — I chant aloud over the pageant;
I chant the world on my Western Sea.”

It is easier to understand some phases of his poetry on this hypothesis, especially if it be joined with another to the effect that he may have been a sort of reversion A Primitive
Type. to a primitive type, unfettered by restraints essential to conditions of civilized life and high art in both ancient and modern times. Of course the question will arise as to how far a return to prehistoric freedom from conventions is a step toward intellectual liberty and the best taste; and there will be reluctance in some quarters to accept as high art performances much removed from

conceptions of it that have hitherto prevailed. The maxim that true art is an improvement upon nature has been too long current to be slighted, and nature as raw material without artistic treatment is not at present in great demand. It may be the fault of present conditions in society as opposed to the pristine simplicity of the stone age, but a return to it cannot be expected to take place speedily. At the same time any protest against tendencies to over-refinement, artificiality, and dilettantism in art or life may be welcomed as a beckoning back toward the sturdy and primeval elements from which prosperity is apt to warp a people. The danger in such a look backward from the present, or even too far forward into a hopeful future, is that it fall into artificialities and mannerisms of its own in the attempt to accomplish too much.

It must be accorded to Whitman that he outgrew some of his early faults as years and their discipline wrought the customary changes. His later work has fewer discordant notes, and his best inspirations involuntarily approach the conventional forms into which contemporaneous poetry fell, although his deliberate purpose succeeded in debarring rhyme to the end of his days. But the tone of the aggregate later verse is higher, and he emphasizes the things that are important, and does not so often make accidents of equal value with essentials. In his final arrangement of forty years' work he seems to have tried to keep up the confusion by interlarding verses written in the fifties and before with poems in a higher strain composed in the next decade; but these last do not need the appended dates to label them as the product of his autumnal years and ripened judgment. Beginning in 1860 with the sympathetic idyl of "Out of the Cradle

Improvement
with Age.

Endlessly Rocking" with its premonitory note of death and destination, the "Sea-Shore Memories" follow like one sad wave after another out of the infinite and unknown, breaking upon the familiar shore and ending in 1872 with the "Mystic Trumpeter." Between are "Elemental Drifts," "Tears," "On the Beach at Night," the elegy "Brother of All," "Finale to the Shore," his Commencement poem at Dartmouth College—"As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free," "O Star of France," and "One Song, America, Before I Go,"

"I'd sing o'er all the rest, with trumpet sound,
For thee—the Future."

And among the last, "Whispers of Heavenly Death," "Darest Thou Now, O Soul," and "The Last Invocation":

"At the last, tenderly,
From the walls of the powerful, fortified house,
From the clasp of knitted locks—from the keep of the well-
Let me be wafted." [closed doors,

"Pensive and faltering,
The words, *the dead*, I write;
For living are the Dead;
(Haply the only living, only real,
And I the apparition—I the spectre)."

To do Whitman justice his poems should be read in reverse order of their composition. The first emotion will not then be productive of derision or disgust; and by the time the early work is reached, the volume may be laid aside as no longer interesting. But his best need not be lost through infelicities in the poorest. For the immature judicious selections might be made, such as Englishmen compiled and thus became endorsers and admirers, calling his countrymen back to take a second look at the poet they were summarily rejecting. When they read "Ashes

of Soldiers," "In Midnight Sleep," "Camps of Green," "Pensive on Her Dead Gazing," "President Lincoln's Burial Hymn," and "My Captain, O My Captain," they who lived and fought and sorrowed in that stormy time confessed that it had found a voice full of sympathy and faith and hope for the land which had been kept in all its vast integrity at great cost. Such a bard was not to be forced out of the tuneful company which commemorated the heroic dead. Nor one who could write a world-wide poem like this:

"Hark! some wild trumpeter — some strange musician,
 Hovering unseen in air, vibrates capricious tunes to-night.
 'Blow, trumpeter, free and clear — I follow thee,
 While at thy liquid prelude, glad, serene,
 The fretting world, the streets, the noisy hours of day, withdraw;
 A holy calm descends, like dew, upon me,
 I walk, in cool refreshing night, the walks of Paradise,
 I scent the grass, the moist air, and the roses.

"O trumpeter! methinks I am myself the instrument thou playest!
 Thou melt'st my heart, my brain — thou movest, drawest, changest
 them, at will:

And now thy sullen notes send darkness through me;
 Thou takest away all cheering light — all hope:
 I see the enslaved, the overthrown, the hurt, the opprest of the whole
 earth;
 I feel the measureless shame and humiliation of my race — it
 becomes all mine;
 Mine too the revenges of humanity — the wrongs of ages — baffled
 feuds and hatreds;
 Utter defeat upon me weighs — all lost! the foe victorious!
 (Yet 'mid the ruins Pride colossal stands, unshaken to the last;
 Endurance, resolution to the last.)

"Now, trumpeter, for thy close,
 Vouchsafe a higher strain than any yet;
 Sing to my soul — renew its languishing faith and hope;
 Rouse up my slow belief — give me some vision of the future;
 Give me, for once, its prophecy and joy."

It may be that, as he asserted, he will be more and more a poet for the future. Indications are not wanting that his readers are multiplying, with appreciation for his best thought and expression, and amusement rather than horror at the poor taste in places as of a pre-Adamite man. In their diversity of phases his poems will find a corresponding diversity of readers, and there will be few who can find nothing for themselves amid so much variety.

In closing the list of greater poets, mention at least should be made of others who have kept within time-honored bounds and have also written excellent verse, notably Stedman and Stoddard and Sill in the North; Lanier, Timrod, and Hayne in the South. To recall their names is sufficient for those who know the merits of each. Others by reading their poems will see why their work is loved and their names are honored throughout the land.

XXXI

SPARKS, BANCROFT, HILDRETH, PRESCOTT

AMONG the American writers of the nineteenth century no group won greater distinction than the historians. This is true of them not only as faithful and impartial recorders of what has taken place, but also as makers of literature. The gradual growth toward such achievement from the diaries and annals of colony times had culminated in the "History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay," by Hutchinson, the last of its governors. With the new nation and the nineteenth century a new historical method appeared. Its pioneer was Jared Sparks, a man whose usefulness and ability are in danger of being overlooked amid the greater accomplishments which distinguished his successors.

His upward career is illustrative of the enterprising times in which he lived. A Connecticut farmer boy of twelve at the incoming of the century, he
Sparks. became a miller, schoolmaster, college tutor, editor of the "North American Review," Unitarian minister, chaplain of the House of Representatives, professor of history, and finally president of Harvard. On his way to this eminence, and while writing controversial and biographical essays, he had in view a plan to publish the writings of George Washington, including his correspondence, addresses, messages, and other papers, adding an account of his life. It was the first systematic attempt

here to present in a readable form the original sources of history. They were already beginning to be scattered far and wide, so far as his subject was concerned. Some of the most valuable were jealously guarded by their possessors. Long journeys had to be made in this country and diligent research pursued in other lands. Despite innumerable difficulties and hindrances, he brought out a monumental work in twelve volumes between 1834 and 1837. Meantime he edited the "Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution" and "The Life of Gouverneur Morris." Also he was the editor of twenty-five volumes of the "Library of American Biography," writing several of the lives himself. Later he published the "Works of Benjamin Franklin" in ten volumes, and finally four volumes of the "Correspondence of the American Revolution."

As the earliest biographer of Washington,—anticipating Paulding by a year and the recent method of documentary biography by many years,—his estimate of his subject's character is worth comparing with later reproductions of the critical method. After noticing his external appearance he says:

"The character of his mind was unfolded in the public and private acts of his life; and the proofs of his greatness are seen almost as much in the one as in the other. The same qualities which raised him to the ascendancy he possessed over the will of a nation as the commander of armies and chief magistrate, caused him to be loved and respected as an individual. Wisdom, judgment, prudence, and firmness were his predominant traits. No man ever saw more clearly the relative importance of things and actions, or divested himself more entirely of the bias of personal interest, partiality, and prejudice in discriminating between the true and the false, the right and the wrong in

all questions presented to him. He deliberated slowly but decided surely; and when his decision was once formed, he seldom reversed it, and never relaxed from the execution of a measure till it was completed. Courage, physical and moral, was a part of his nature; and whether in battle or in the midst of popular excitement, he was fearless of danger and regardless of consequences to himself.

"His ambition was of that noble kind which aims to excel in whatever it undertakes, and to acquire a power over the hearts of men by promoting their happiness and winning their affections. Sensitive to the approbation of others and solicitous to deserve it, he made no concessions to gain their applause either by flattering their vanity or yielding to their caprices. Cautious without timidity, bold without rashness, cool in counsel, deliberate but firm in action, clear in foresight, patient under reverses, steady, persevering, and self-possessed, he met and conquered every obstacle that obstructed his path to honor, renown, and success."

To this fragment might be added what Sparks says of his moral and religious traits, summing up all in the assertion that it was "the happy combination of rare talents and qualities, the harmonious union of the intellectual and moral powers, rather than the dazzling splendor of any one trait, which constituted the grandeur of his character.

It would not be just to require of this earliest historian all the excellencies of the men who availed themselves of his preliminary labors and started where he dropped his pen. It is enough to say for him that in the departments which fell to him as explorer he was thorough, and that his judgment of what to keep and what to reject was good. Better even for himself and his successors was the habit of orderly arranging his collected material. His method and system were instinc-

His Methods.

tive. From his youth he was exact with a mathematical precision, accumulating notebooks, journals, and letter files. Order was the first of his rules of labor after investigation, and was largely the secret of his accomplishing so much. He lost no time in a second search for a fact once discovered.

Looking backward to the period of historical beginning, this writer appears as the rescuer of materials which were ready to perish. He also furnished an example of simple and clear treatment of documents written by many hands with every diversity of motive and style. If he saw graces where others have seen defects it may be to his credit. Besides, the critical method in historical composition was not yet in full force. It is enough for one man to collect material and to lay foundations. These labors are sometimes forgotten when the superstructure is built and adorned.

George Bancroft was Sparks' immediate successor in the field of American history, and the first historian of the period to cover the entire ground of colonial affairs and the beginning of the nation down to 1789. For this undertaking he had made admirable preparation. Graduating from Harvard in 1816, he spent five years in Germany and France in the study of European literatures, philosophy, and history under the foremost scholars of the age. Wolf and Hegel, Bunsen and Niebuhr, Cousin and Constant were among his instructors. After varied studies he determined to make the early history of his own country the study of a lifetime. He brought to the investigation a wealth of learning and a knowledge of methods which placed him far in advance of all the annalists and chroniclers and

George
Bancroft.

historians who had preceded him. A philosophical historian had sprung up with the new movement in letters who would link events with their causes and find these in remote places and times.

Before he settled down to this main work of his life he undertook something in the line of education which

The Round
Hill School.

was remarkable enough to merit passing notice. After a year in Harvard as instructor he established a school on Round Hill in Northampton, in connection with Dr. Cogswell, somewhat after the model of the German gymnasia. Foreign teachers were employed and commodious houses were built on one of the most delightful sites in the region. Students came from far and near. For seven years, from 1823 to 1830, the school continued to give the best and broadest preparation for college. Gymnastic exercises were maintained long before they were introduced in other schools and colleges. But the Round Hill School was in advance of its age and could furnish a better preparatory course than the average student needed in order to enter the colleges of that day. For this reason and others it was discontinued. When one sees the colleges and fitting schools which have since sprung up around the base of the hill or within sight from its summit, the thought is suggested that the good seed sown there by the first of American historians may have sprung up to an abundant harvest.

It was while he was one of the principals of this school that Bancroft began his "History of the United States" by collecting materials for subsequent writing. In 1834 the first volume appeared. The next year he removed to Springfield for a stay of

"History of
the United
States."

three years, in which he finished the second volume, when he was appointed collector of the port of Boston. The third volume was issued in 1840. Then followed a period of research in New York, while Massachusetts democracy was trying to elect him governor, as the party had before elected him representative to the general court, a position which he declined. In 1845 he was appointed secretary of the navy. Here, again, his interest in education resulted in the establishment of a naval school at Annapolis to correspond to the military school at West Point. The next year found him minister plenipotentiary at the court of St. James, a position which enabled him to pursue his investigations in American history. The results appeared after his return home, when in 1852 the fifth and sixth volumes appeared, another two years later, and the final volume in 1858.

The entire work was an achievement of which the nation was justly proud. It was not only broadly national and unprovincial, but world-wide in its scope, dealing with European questions in their relation to a people gathered from every quarter of the old world. A man of narrower education could not have written such a history. He traced causes and connecting lines across the ocean which colonial predecessors had turned up to the clouds and called them special and wonderful dispensations of Providence. He showed that these had their origin in events which were already a part of European history, and that immigrants had brought with them from over the Atlantic seeds of revolution and of empire. In this wide outlook he was a leader of recent and larger methods of historical composition, which many have since followed to the great advantage of their

readers. All delight to have causes of events pointed out, and the more remote the cause the greater the pleasure in its discovery.

As literature Bancroft's history is the production of an industrious and conscientious writer. The fact and what he deemed its bearing were of more consequence to him than its presentation, provided this was clear and, if necessary, forcible. Probably a sense of the magnitude and dignity of his task was always before him. Then the character of the man, his inheritance from a Puritan past and the severe stateliness which prevailed in high places far into the century may account for a prevailing sobriety which sometimes suggests monotony. There are interesting passages which the reader will find for himself in the table of contents with the expectation of picturesque treatment. He must be content if they are accurate and fair and not overdrawn to support a theory. After all, it was best that our earliest historian should write in this way rather than as a romancer. The subject itself was of interest to a people whose tastes were simple and appetite for information keen, as yet unspoiled by spiced literature. They read the volumes with eagerness as they appeared. Edition after edition was called for in this country and others. The work was phenomenal then, and still remains a standard which will not easily be supplanted, especially by the documentary histories from which each reader is expected to draw his own conclusions. In history, as in religion, there are some people who like to have their thinking done for them by a competent authority. Bancroft was willing to do this, and, after making allowance for any bias that he may have had, he is a trustworthy historian of the

colonial and revolutionary periods of American life. He is still without a rival in his chosen field.

His voluminous history will be read through in course by few, but there are topics in the table of contents which will interest all students of our early and later colonial life—for example, "The Mayflower," "Pilgrims," "Red Men," "Annapolis," "St. Augustine," "Stamp Tax," "Samuel Adams," "Washington," "Cabal of Conway," "Independence of the United States." The treatment of other topics will be found equally valuable according to the interest of each reader. Besides his history Bancroft left as remainders of his principal work a volume of "Literary and Historical Miscellanies" and a monograph on the "Formation of the Constitution," with biographical and memorial addresses. Also a collection of his early poems and a political oration delivered at Northampton in 1826. Both of these are another example of the immature windfalls which persist in being reckoned with an author's riper and more creditable productions.

The closing paragraph of the tenth volume, in which the historian brings the account of peace negotiations to an end, contains the result of a seven years' war.

"The articles of peace, though entitled provisional, were made definitive by a declaration in the preamble. Friends of Franklin gathered around him, and as the Duke of Rochefoucauld kissed him for joy, 'My friend,' said Franklin, 'could I have hoped at such an age to have enjoyed so great happiness?' The treaty was not a compromise, nor a compact imposed by force, but a free and perfect solution and perpetual settlement of all that had been called in question. By doing an act of justice to her former colonies, England rescued her own liberties at home from imminent danger, and opened the way for their slow but certain development. The narrowly selfish colonial

policy which had led to the cruel and unnatural war was cast aside forever by Great Britain, which was henceforward, as the great colonizing power, to sow all the oceans with the seed of republics. For the United States, the war, which began by an encounter with a few husbandmen embattled on Lexington Green, ended with their independence and possession of all the country from the St. Croix to the southwestern Mississippi, from the Lake of the Woods to the St. Mary. In time past, republics had been confined to cities and their dependencies, or to small cantons; the United States avowed themselves able to fill a continental territory with commonwealths. While the constitutions of their separate members, resting on the principle of self-direction, were, in most respects, the best in the world, they had no general government; and as they went forth on untried paths, kings expected to see the confederacy fly into fragments, or lapse into helpless anarchy. But for all the want of government, their solemn pledge to one another of mutual citizenship and perpetual union made them one people; and that people was superior to its institutions, possessing the vital force which goes before organization and gives it strength and form. Yet for success the liberty of the individual must know how to set itself bounds; and the states, displaying the highest quality of greatness, must learn to temper their rule of themselves by their own moderation."

Richard Hildreth's "History of the United States" used to be mentioned as supplemental to Bancroft's. It brings the record down a generation later through the administrations of the first four presidents to 1821. The views of Federalist and Whig are also emphasized as opposed to Bancroft's principles of democracy. As a work of history and literature it has fallen behind in the years that have tested the permanent elements in both. Personal convictions every historian must have, but for himself rather than for readers who are ready to take issue with him, especially with regard to the character

of public men. Each of these historians had them, but Hildreth gave his own freer expression than the other, laying himself open to the charge of partisanship. Still, he will always have weight in matters of fact relating to the period of which he treated. Besides, he was not backward in taking the right side in questions which were important in his day.

Three years after the publication of the first volume of Bancroft's history another phase of historical composition appeared in the "History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic," by ^{Prescott.} William Hickling Prescott. When readers had turned a few leaves they knew that they had struck something more than history. If the record had been less faithful to fact it is likely they would have read on and on, charmed with the way the story was told. Inquiry about the author found him a Salem boy till twelve, afterward living in Boston, graduated from Harvard in 1814, with vision impaired for a lifetime by a crust of bread thrown in a students' frolic. After two years of travel he settled in Boston, and at the age of twenty-five began the study of ancient and modern literatures, and six years later of Spanish history and literature, with special reference to the work of subsequent years. Fortunately, he had the means to command assistance in readers and copyists, although he made the first drafts himself by the aid of a writing frame of parallel wires. But the preliminary composition was done in his mind, and retained in a memory sufficiently tenacious to hold the equivalent of sixty printed pages. Over this material he labored in his walks and drives until it was ready to be put upon paper.

After ten years of preparation and ten more spent in composing, he completed his first undertaking at the age of forty. He had an immediate reward in the enthusiastic reception that was given it. The long and laborious years had not been passed in vain. Readers dropped their novels to follow the more interesting details of Spanish adventure in a period full of romance. The different kingdoms of Spain had been united under one monarchy, which was now devising vast enterprises of discovery and conquest in a hemisphere whose existence had been unsuspected before the voyage of Columbus. The establishment of the Inquisition, the invasion by the Moors, the war of Granada and the Italian wars, the treatment of Columbus, the Spanish colonial policy, the character of the sovereigns, the administration of Cardinal Ximenes, are topics which were treated in a style corresponding to their interest. It was an age of barbaric splendor, of chivalric deeds, and daring enterprises. Such themes could not be treated coldly, however exactly and truthfully. They were inspiring to the imagination. Consequently the account of them by a writer who had given much attention to style is most graphic. It caught the color of the events described and of the deeds recounted. The glint of armor is in it, the crimson and gold of flaunting banners, and the movement of advancing hosts.

The interest of the historian himself naturally culminated in the characters of the two personages who most commended themselves to his sense of justice and nobility, Queen Isabella and Columbus. How he regarded the first may be seen from portions of the chapter which reviews her life.

" Her person was of the middle height, and well proportioned. She had a clear, fresh complexion, with light blue eyes and auburn hair, — a style of beauty exceedingly rare in Spain. Her features were regular, and universally allowed to be uncommonly handsome. Her manners were gracious and pleasing. They were marked by natural dignity and modest reserve, tempered by an affability which flowed from the kindness of her disposition. The respect which she imposed was mingled with the strongest feelings of devotion and love. By her condescending and captivating deportment, as well as by her higher qualities, she gained an ascendancy over her turbulent subjects which no king of Spain could ever boast.

She was temperate and frugal, simple and economical, of a sedate though cheerful temper, with little taste for the frivolous amusements which make up so much of a court life.

Among her moral qualities the most conspicuous, perhaps, was her magnanimity. Her schemes were vast, and executed in the same noble spirit in which they were conceived and with the most direct and open policy. She seconded Columbus in the prosecution of his arduous enterprise and shielded him from the calumny of his enemies.

But the principle which gave a peculiar coloring to every feature of Isabella's mind was piety. It shone forth from the very depths of her soul with a heavenly radiance which illuminated her whole character.

Though blemishes of the deepest dye are on her administration, they certainly are not to be regarded as such on her moral character. It was not to be expected that a solitary woman, filled with natural diffidence of her own capacity in such subjects, should array herself against those venerated counsellors whom she had been taught from her cradle to look to as the guides and guardians of her conscience."

This and much more is followed by a discriminating comparison of Isabella with Elizabeth of England, the two sovereigns of the chief kingdoms of Europe in an age of vast enterprise and ambition.

The demand for this new example of historical writing was a surprise to the author and all concerned. Copies could not be furnished as fast as they were called for. In a few months more were sold than it was expected could be disposed of in five years. No such success had been reached by dignified work in this country.

A similar welcome was given to the "Conquest of Mexico" six years later. In four months the first edi-

Other
Works.

tion of five thousand copies was exhausted. Moreover, one hundred and thirty critics had sent the author their approval in as many newspapers. Nothing further could be asked of his countrymen. From England the same testimony came in elaborate reviews by such scholars as Charles Philips and Dean Milman. Tributes to the "Conquest of Peru" were in the same vein two years afterward, and the demand for it as great as for his two previous works and at the rate of one thousand copies a month. The "Reign of Philip II." was unfinished at his death in 1859. But he needed nothing to give him a more assured place in the world of letters. This was recognized abroad as well as at home, and is now as it was in his lifetime. Under difficulties which none have contended with who have undertaken a task of such magnitude — not even Milton and Thierry — Prescott accomplished a work that would have been more than creditable to an investigator with good eyesight. Without this he demonstrated the possibilities of a reflective mind and the inner vision, and the superiority of a high purpose and noble character to bodily infirmity. He furnished another example of the heroic in literature.

XXXII

MOTLEY AND PARKMAN

SPAIN was a subject of engrossing interest to our earlier historians. Irving wrote of Granada, the Alhambra, and the voyages which Columbus made under royal auspices. Prescott composed three elaborate works about the occupation of Central American domains by Spanish invaders. Then Motley followed with his accounts of the struggle against the aggressions of Spain in the Low Countries. In all these histories a view is given of what was once a mighty power in Europe and America, which contrasts strangely with the estimate of it produced by its subsequent decline.

John Lothrop Motley, like Hildreth and Bancroft and Prescott, was a Massachusetts boy, born in Dorchester in 1814 and graduated from Harvard in 1831. After two years' study in Germany he read <sup>Motley's
Early Efforts.</sup> law, as several men of letters had before him, while making up his mind with regard to the branch of literature he would choose for a profession. A semi-biographical novel entitled "Morton's Hope" did not encourage him or his friends to believe that fiction was his forte. Neither did the later "Merry Mount, a Romance of the Massachusetts Colony," reverse the first judgment, although the descriptive passages gave promise of something better in after years. Between the two stories he had published a fifty-page article in the "North American Review" on Peter the Great, which was prophetic of his true

vocation as a writer of history and biography. Whereupon his friends, who had withheld their commendation of his romances, urged him to undertake something large in the historical line. It is probable that he needed little urging, since he had already begun the study of events and principles, also of fiction, for their picturesque setting. Out of the last came a critical essay upon Balzac, followed by another on the "Polity of the Puritans," broad and charitable, as might be expected from the author's antecedents.

Meantime his choice of a great historical theme had fallen upon the "Rise of the Dutch Republic." It was an inspiring study, from remote ages when barbarian tribes inhabiting low morasses by the sea sent the Batavian legion to be the bodyguard of Roman emperors down to the times of Charles Martel and Charlemagne and of the dukes of Burgundy, when the Netherlands became the richest and most populous part of Europe. And afterward, when the daughter of Charles the Bold took the title to the Austrian Maximilian, her husband, and when their grandson resigned it to Philip II. of Spain in 1555, the same opulence and splendor went with the transmitted inheritance. So also did a growing Protestantism, an element not agreeable to the last inheritor, who straightway undertook to uproot the new Reformation doctrines, and to restore the Roman Catholic supremacy by the tyranny of Alva, which eventually united the provinces in a republic whose naval power became the foremost in the world, ultimately compelling Spain to acknowledge its independence, and laying the foundation of a colonial system which is still a factor in European politics.

The "Dutch Republic."

This growth of discordant states beneath the hand of the oppressor into a united, free, and potent nation was a theme to stir the American historian to a rare persistence of research and labor among the archives of the old world. He had already been working some years at home on his projected history when he found that to do the subject justice he must resort to the libraries of Europe. He gave this account of himself at Brussels in 1853:

"I find so much original matter here and so many emendations to make that I am ready to despair. However, there is nothing to do but to penelopeize, pull to pieces and stitch away again. I go day after day to the archives here (as I went all summer at The Hague) studying old letters and documents. Here I remain among my fellow worms, feeding on these musty mulberry leaves, out of which we are afterward to spin our silk. It is, however, not without its amusement in a moldy sort of a way, this reading of dead letters. It is something to read the real, bona fide signs manual of such fellows as William of Orange, Count Egmont, Alexander Farnese, Philip II., Cardinal Granvelle, and the rest of them."

What a fabric he wove out of these "musty leaves" after ten years of delving was seen in 1856, when the three solid octavos of the "Dutch Republic" were issued simultaneously in London and New York. Readers were enthusiastic in their admiration, and great critics sent in their approval. Mr. Froude wrote in the "Westminster Review": "Of Mr. Motley's antecedents we know nothing. If he has previously appeared before the public his reputation has not crossed the Atlantic. It will not be so now. We believe that we may promise him as warm a welcome among ourselves as he will

receive even in America; that his place will be at once conceded to him among the first historians in our common language." And so said Guizot, Lieber, and the rest of foreign critics. At home Edward Everett, Irving, Bancroft, Hillard, and Sumner joined in the general acclamation. Prescott's testimony was as valuable as it was graceful, since the circle of Motley's investigations had cut into his own, as his previously had intersected the field which Irving had pre-empted. A pleasing chapter might be added to the amenities of literature on the courtesy of these three authors to each other in the occupation of this historical El Dorado. It proved rich enough for all, and the world is fortunate in that it was mined by three instead of one alone. Spain itself can afford to offset some of the indignities it has lately suffered with the tribute which three Americans have paid before all the world to her greatness and glory in the day of her power.

No brief extracts from Motley's voluminous writings can give an adequate idea of their fitness to the general subject or their adaptation to particular sections and episodes. Readers who cannot cover the length and breadth of his historical scheme, embracing as it did the "History of the United Netherlands," and the "Life and Death of John of Barneveld," besides the "Dutch Republic," such readers will judge of the entire work by topics which have a romantic interest both in themselves and in the manner of their treatment by the historian. His portraiture of great personages and his description of stirring events are more faithful and vivid than any painting, because they reproduce changing records and continuous action as pictorial art cannot.

Topics of
Interest.

The abilities and shortcomings of Henry of Navarre, the piety, firmness, and political sagacity of William the Silent, the lonely greatness of Queen Elizabeth and her puzzling inconsistencies, the administrative enterprise of Philip II., are characterizations both interesting and instructive. The accounts of the siege of Antwerp, the defence of Leyden, the defeat of the Armada, and of other prominent incidents are great historic panoramas which move before the reader's vision with the vivid reality that belonged to the events they record.

To Americans perhaps the most interesting passage is the episode of the Pilgrims' residence in Leyden constituting the nineteenth chapter in the "Life of John of Barneveld."

"It so happened that there were some English Puritans living at that moment in Leyden. They formed an independent society by themselves which they called a Congregational Church, and in which were some three hundred communicants. The length of their residence there was almost exactly coeval with the Twelve Years' Truce.

"All these Englishmen were not poor. Many of them occupied houses of fair value, and were admitted to the freedom of the city. The pastor with three of his congregation lived in a comfortable mansion, which they had purchased for the considerable sum of 8000 florins, and on the garden of which they subsequently erected twenty-one lesser tenements for the use of the poorer brethren.

"Thus the little community, which grew gradually larger by emigration from England, passed many years of tranquillity. They gave offence to none and were respected by all.

"The little English congregation remained at Leyden till toward the end of the Truce, thriving, orderly, respected, happy. They were witnesses to the tumultuous, disastrous, and tragical events which darkened the Republic in those later years, them-

selves unobserved and unmolested. They got their living as best they might by weaving, spinning, and other humble trades ; they borrowed money on mortgages, they built houses, they made wills, and such births, deaths, and marriages as occurred among them were registered by the town-clerk.

“At last for a variety of reasons they resolved to leave the Netherlands. Perhaps they were appalled by the excesses into which men of their own religious sentiments had been carried by theological and political passion. At any rate, depart they would ; the larger half of the congregation remaining behind however till the pioneers had broken the way, and in their own language ‘laid the stepping-stones.’

“They had thought of lands beneath the Equator ; but the tropical scheme was soon abandoned. They offered to colonize New Amsterdam if assured of the protection of the United Provinces. Their petition had been rejected. They had then turned their faces to their old master and their own country, applying to the Virginia Company for a land-patent, which they were only too happy to promise, and to the King for liberty of religion in the wilderness, confirmed under his broad seal, which his Majesty of course refused. It was hinted, however, that James would connive at them and not molest them if they carried themselves peaceably. So they resolved to go without the seal, for, said their magistrate very wisely, ‘if there should be a purpose or desire to wrong them, a seal would not serve their turn though it were as broad as the house-floor.’

“These were the Pilgrim Fathers of New England, the founders of what was to be the mightiest republic of modern history, mighty and stable because founded upon an idea.

“It signifies not how much or how little one may sympathize with their dogma or their discipline now. To the fact that the early settlement of the wilderness was by men of earnestness and faith, in the midst of savage beasts, more savage men, and unimaginable difficulties and dangers, there can be little doubt that the highest forms of Western civilization are due.”

Of course there are not in this plain account the dramatic features which distinguish such portrayals as that of the trial and execution of the great Advocate of Holland, or even that of the escape of Grotius in a book-chest from his prison of thirteen walls, not to mention again the topics already enumerated, to which others of similar graphic interest might be added. The writer who could thus depict such scenes had gathered the testimony of eye-witnesses from dusty manuscripts and moldy letters and ponderous chronicles. Their diverse representations from outside or inside the walls of a beleaguered city, from the foot of a scaffold, or on the edge of the crowd, he put together in consistent narrative full of strength and radiant with light. The sword and helmet and axe flash again in the sunlight; diplomats, intriguers, and assassins shadow one another in dark corners of castle and palace. It is often a picture painted with blood and smoke, lurid for a moment with the flash of cannon or the flames of a burning city. Only at last when truth and righteousness begin to prevail does the sky clear and a new hope dawn for an oppressed people.

It was not permitted this historian to finish the story of the "Eighty Years' Tragedy" by writing the last act in the "Thirty Years' War." In "John of Barneveld" he had set forth what one of his literary predecessors might have called the "floundering of a double Dutchman in a sea of theological mud" over the "five points of the Arminians and the seven points of the Gomarites" — foreknowledge, free will, election, irresistible grace, and so on. It was interesting to him as an antitype of a similar wrangle in New England, over the same points after the Pilgrims came out of Holland. But the brave little state itself

found a historian worthy of the valiant people who first rescued its territory from the sea and defended it from the invasion of tyrants. Motley himself, ill treated by the government which he honored in Vienna and London, has met with a recognition higher than a chief magistrate could bestow or take away in his acknowledged position as, all in all, our greatest historian. His record is in the labor of a lifetime and in the tributes which have been paid to his work and his character by competent authorities both in his own country and in foreign lands.

What Prescott did for the discoveries and conquests of Spain in tropical America Parkman accomplished for the aggressions of France in the North. His theme was another instance of the felicity of genius shown in the choice of a subject as well as in its treatment. In his case the field was practically unoccupied when he entered it, and he so cultivated it that there was no need of another hand. All who shall follow him for some time will find little which he did not mark or reject. They will have to content themselves with the superfluities which he cast away and with what was withheld from him.

Parkman followed the example of a majority of the writers in the New England renaissance in being the son of a minister in revolt against ecclesiastical traditions. Of course he would go to Harvard, where the atmosphere was no longer theologically too high and dry. Then, like his immediate predecessors, he tried his hand at fiction in "Vassall Morton," before settling down to history writing. One other experiment he also made in going to live with the Sioux Indians in the Black Hills in order to study the Indian as he is, or rather was

Among
Indians.

before he donned an old silk hat for the principal part of his costume. In 1846 the genuine Dacotah was wrapped in a blanket, decorated with feathers and paint, and armed with arrows and lance. He was like his forefathers, whose alliance with the French constituted a large feature of the struggle which Parkman was going to recount. Then there was the half-breed trapper, another element in the story, combining the characteristics of both races. The Frenchman was an easier study from the present life and historical documents. Unfortunately Parkman came out of this instructive but unnatural episode of savage living with eyesight so impaired by glaring sunlight and wigwam smoke that his subsequent researches were to be attended with the same difficulties that beset Prescott. But the same courageous persistence was his, and also the same triumphant achievement.

It began with a series of magazine sketches, which were published in a volume in 1847, entitled "The Oregon Trail; Sketches of Prairie and Rocky Mountain Life," a transcript of the adventure above mentioned and a preliminary study to the series he

Record of
Struggle for
a Continent.

was about to write, as "The Conspiracy of Pontiac," his next book was a sequel to that series in describing a sort of final shot from a retreating foe after the battle was over. Then came the real opening of the dramatic story in "The Pioneers of France in the New World," 1865, followed at intervals of two or three years by "The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century," "La Salle, or The Discovery of the Great West," "The Old Régime in Canada," "Count Frontenac and New France Under Louis XIV.," and "Montcalm and Wolfe." Together these books are chapters in the history of the contest between France

and England for the possession of this continent — the attempt of the one to surround the other by a line of hostile forces along the great waterway of river and lake from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico, and to crowd English colonists to the seashore and into the sea. The alternative was that the colonists of France might be overrun and dispersed with their savage allies by the encroaching English, who were fast becoming Americans, and, it may be added, who were immensely helped in the process by the ensuing French and Indian War, which showed them their strength.

The history of this war had been written after a fashion for school boys, and in a more elaborate way for adults in the larger histories. An exhaustive treatment of the subject, involving researches in the archives of Canada and France and personal inspection of places where events occurred, became the life work of Francis Parkman. For fifty years he labored with the assistance of readers and copyists, visiting the libraries of Europe seven times and accumulating two hundred folio volumes of copied documents. The assimilation and condensation of these in his mind took final shape in sentences, paragraphs, chapters, and books dictated to amanuenses. It is another instance of the triumph of the intellect over conventional methods of labor with the pen and by the sight of the eyes. Happily this man's fortune permitted him to employ others to do for him what his infirmities did not allow him to undertake.

Doubtless the result was not diminished in quantity or quality. As it stands, the work is a monument to industry, perseverance, and devotion to an early purpose in the face of hindrances full of annoyance

and pain. The men who perform such tasks under such conditions are to be reckoned among the occasional heroes whose deeds and virtues they commemorate. While they are perpetuating the achievements of other men of renown they unconsciously and incidentally build to themselves an everlasting memorial. Such was a secondary result of Parkman's task. In fixing for posterity the fading image and likeness of a passing race of an almost prehistoric barbarism; in depicting the traits of a monarchy which was more absolute here than in its native France, but now as obsolete as some of the words it left in the wilds of Canada; in portraying the sturdy freedom of the British colonist at a convenient distance from a throne not too paternal, except in the matter of revenue; in the description of a wilderness glory untouched by civilized man; in recounting deeds of valor, devotion, and sacrifice, and in painting all the wild pageantry of border warfare, Parkman has made the strife of races for the possession of North America as picturesque as romance without surrendering the truth of history.

The decisive engagement in this prolonged struggle for supremacy is described in the twenty-seventh chapter of "Montcalm and Wolfe," together with the death of both leaders on the heights of Abraham.

"The day broke in clouds and threatening rain. Wolfe's battalions were drawn up along the crest of the heights. He went to reconnoitre the ground, and soon came to the Plains of Abraham — so called from Abraham Martin, a pilot who had owned a piece of land here in the early times of the colony — forming a high plateau at the eastern end of which Quebec stood. At the place that Wolfe chose for his battle-field the plateau was less than a mile wide. Thither the troops advanced and wheeled to form their line of battle, which stretched across the

plateau and faced the city. Montcalm had passed a troubled night. At daybreak he heard the sound of cannon above the town. It was the battery of Samos firing on the English ships. About six o'clock he mounted and rode with Johnstone to the quarters of Vaudreuil, where they saw some two miles away the red ranks of British soldiers on the heights beyond. Montcalm stopped for a few words with Vaudreuil, then set spurs to his horse and rode to the scene of danger.

"The army followed in such order as it might, entered at the Palace Gate, and pressed on in headlong march along the quaint narrow streets of the warlike town; troops of Indians in scalp-locks and war paint, a savage glitter in their deep-set eyes; bands of Canadians whose all was at stake, — faith, country, and home; the colony regulars; the battalions of Old France, a torrent of white uniforms and gleaming bayonets, — victors of Oswego, William Henry, and Ticonderoga. So they swept on, poured out upon the plain, to where the banners of Guienne still fluttered on the ridge. Montcalm was amazed at what he saw. He had expected a detachment, and he found an army. Full in sight before him stretched the lines of Wolfe: the close ranks of the English infantry, a silent wall of red, and the wild array of the Highlanders, with their waving tartans, and bagpipes screaming defiance. Montcalm waited long for the forces he had ordered to join him. He waited in vain. Fight he must, for Wolfe was now in a position to cut off all his supplies. His men were full of ardor, and he resolved to attack before their ardor cooled.

"Three field-pieces plied the English with canister-shot, and fifteen hundred Canadians and Indians fusiladed them in front flank. . . .

"It was towards ten o'clock when Wolfe saw that the crisis was near. The French came on rapidly, uttering loud shouts, and firing as soon as they were within range. The British advanced a few rods; then halted and stood still. When the French were within forty paces the word of command rang out, and a crash of musketry answered all along the line. The volley was delivered with remarkable precision. Another volley followed, and then a furious clattering fire that lasted but a minute or

two. The order was given to charge. Then over the field rose the British cheer, mixed with the Highland slogan. Some of the corps pushed forward with the bayonet; some advanced firing. The clansmen drew their broadswords and dashed on, keen and swift as bloodhounds. At the right Wolfe himself held the charge, at the head of the Louisburg grenadiers. A shot shattered his wrist. He wrapped his handkerchief about it and kept on. Another shot struck him, and he still advanced, when a third lodged in his breast. He staggered and sat on the ground. Carried to the rear by his men he begged them to lay him down. They did so, and asked if he would have a surgeon. 'There is no need,' he answered; 'it's all over with me.' Told that the enemy ran, he exclaimed 'Now God be praised, I will die in peace!' and in a few moments his gallant soul had fled.

"Montcalm, still on horseback, was borne with the tide of fugitives towards the town. As he approached the walls a shot passed through his body. He kept his seat; two soldiers supported him, one on each side, and led his horse through the St. Louis Gate. On the open space within, among the excited crowd, were several women, drawn, no doubt, by eagerness to know the result of the fight. One of them recognized him, saw the streaming blood, and shrieked, '*O mon Dieu ! mon Dieu ! le Marquis est tué !*' 'It's nothing, it's nothing,' replied the death-stricken man; 'don't be troubled for me, my good friends.'"

The death of two commanders was as nothing when compared with the results of the battle in which they fell; for thenceforward a continent was to be English and not French in its speech and its ruling ideas.

XXXIII

SOUTHERN ORATORS

IN this period, as in the colonial, some of its best literature was spoken. It does not much matter whether the preliminary composition was made with pen and ink, wholly or in part, or whether the words flowed unwritten from a mind that had pondered long upon the subject, or whether in their final form they were the result of correction and revision. The version which has been accepted and approved by the speaker or, in some instances, by hearers and contemporaries, is what must abide the tests of literary value.

The oratory which had become a prominent feature of intellectual life before the war for independence and up to the adoption of the Constitution received a new impulse when this instrument came to be the rule of national administration. It was a rule which was new to all and not a favorite with many. Those who had made concessions could not forget what they had surrendered. There was room for varied and diverse interpretation of rights and privileges. In particular the powers which belonged to the original colonies before there was either federation or union were the cause of much dispute, and when a union of these separate and sometimes discordant provinces was agreed upon and established by the Constitution a vast amount of definition and discussion followed,—as also with respect to

Deliberative
Oratory.

home and foreign policies and the conflicting interests of different sections of the country. All this had to be brought into the sessions of the people's representatives and those of each state assembled in Congress, where deliberative oratory followed as a matter of course.

It would have been strange if this had not been of a high order, considering the antecedents of eloquence in this country and examples of it in the British Parliament easily accessible in the reported speeches of illustrious orators. In the first quarter of the century and later oral discourse was the principal means of political instruction. The people had been trained to listen by two or three sermons and lectures a week for two centuries, and a corresponding education had been given by practice in the pulpit and at the bar to a race of speakers. The newspaper was as yet limited to a fractional part of its present scope and circulation. The town-meeting, the campaign assembly, the state legislature, the house of representatives, and the senate chamber were the progressive steps in the political education of statesmen who in those days listened to the words that were spoken, having no "organ" laid upon their desks each morning to guide them in the formation of their daily opinions and principles more or less permanent. The man who in those years aspired to influence his fellow-citizens and legislators had to depend upon his speech, in all the comprehensive meaning of the term, including his intellectual attainments as well as his personal power with an audience. As a consequence, the orator's art became one of the ambitions of a public man, more easily acquired then by reason of its general prevalence and the inheritance from preceding generations.

Congressional oratory may conveniently be said to begin with the opening of the century, when in 1800

John Randolph. John Randolph was sent to Congress. It was fitting that the traditional eloquence of the South should be continued by this ambitious though eccentric Virginian. He cannot be called a man of peace, being usually, as was once said, "in opposition to the exercise of authority by anybody but himself." This disposition fostered a denunciatory habit of speech which easily ran into invective and sometimes malediction. It was a stormy sort of eloquence, enjoyed, no doubt, by sympathizing colleagues more than by opponents. Still, it is said that his speeches were read more generally than those of any other member of Congress. Events that were to take place half a century later appear to have been foreseen by this ill-boding but true prophet, yet what he dreaded as a "coalition of knavery and fanaticism" finally issued in the united devotion of all parties and sections to a common country. He could predict the incidental calamity, but could not see the ultimate restoration. Nevertheless, he left on record one phase of oratory, and if it is sombre and even violent at times its counterpart can be found wherever an ardent and courageous soul has met evils that threatened disaster.

No paragraph from his speeches can show one-half of any orator's power, but a few sentences may be suggestive of his spirit. On so tame an issue as the tariff Randolph could find place for the following words :

"'All policy is very suspicious,' says an eminent statesman, 'that sacrifices the interest of any part of a community to the ideal good of the whole. With all the fantastical and preposterous theories about the rights of man there is nothing but

power that can restrain power.' I do not stop here to argue about the constitutionality of this bill; I consider the Constitution a dead letter. I consider it to consist at this time of the power of the general government and the power of the states—that is the Constitution. 'You may intrench yourself in parchment to the teeth,' says Lord Chatham, 'the sword will find its way to the vitals of the Constitution.' I have no faith in parchment; I have faith in the power of that Commonwealth of which I am an unworthy son, and in the power of those states which went with us through the valley of the shadow of death in the war of our independence. If you prevent exportation and draw the last shilling from our pockets, what are the checks of the Constitution to us? A fig for the Constitution! When the scorpion's sting is probing us to the quick shall we stop to chop logic? Shall we get some learned and cunning clerk to say whether the power to do this is to be found in the Constitution, and then, like the animal whose fleece forms so material a portion of this bill, quietly lie down to be shorn? We have other business to attend to and our affairs need our attention at home; and I, sir, would not give one farthing for any man who prefers being here in Congress to being at home, who is a good public man and a bad private one. With these views and feelings I move that the bill be indefinitely postponed."

The name of Henry Clay recalls a career which was prominent and continuous for nearly half a century. It was too pronounced in its statesmanship not to elicit a variety of testimony with regard to his political aims, but, as in all such cases, the truth lies midway between extremes. With respect to his eloquence, however, the tributes of contemporaries are more concordant. It was for its kind unsurpassed, and, considering the advantages of education and training of which he was deprived, it was phenomenal. The son

Henry Clay.

of a Baptist minister who left him the best inheritance that can be transmitted to a youth of political ambitions, a good voice and impressive delivery, the young lawyer, who had received his academic education in a log cabin school and his graduate course in a grocery store, began professional life as clerk in a chancery court. After four years of recording decisions he was granted license to practise in Richmond, where he established a school of oratory in the form of a debating club. At the age of twenty-one he opened an office in Lexington, Kentucky, and was soon full of business and on the high road to politics. His oratorical ability helped him to win in a contest where his opponent's speech was followed by deafening applause, but his own by profound and impressive silence. From 1806 to 1811 he was in the House of Representatives or the Senate at Washington, where he continued with short interruptions until he was seventy-three.

Of necessity his oratory was political and deliberative, with an honesty and sincerity that carried somewhat of his own convictions to all who heard him speak. Off the line of these strong convictions he could not be eloquent. Along that line he was able to inspire others with his own fearless sentiments and hopeful expectations. Even his opponents were ready to acknowledge the straightforward honesty of his speech. This was clear in statement and addressed to the common sense of his hearers. His own antecedents favored such sympathetic knowledge of their limitations, and he made himself understood by the average man.

Besides the sincerity and lucidity of his discourse, there was an earnestness which goes for much, even

Qualities of
His Speech.

when a speaker is neither clear nor sincere. Added to these qualities, there is little needed to make him effective. The tremendous energy of Clay is one of the traditions of his eloquence. And with it and his other cardinal points of speech went also a majestic presence, a wonderful voice, a gracious and commanding manner, winning, overawing, and inspiring. Contemporaries tell of assemblies breathless as they listened, and wild with enthusiasm, carried away with stormy emotions, and overwhelming him with expressions of pride and affection when he had finished.

When his speeches passed into printed pages they necessarily lost much of the personal power which went with the magnetic orator, but they have the conservative element which makes them oratorical literature. They bear well the test of much rehearsing in the schools and of frequent reading by the student of eloquence and of our political history. The issues are dead which called them forth, but so are those which have from time to time inspired the loftiest utterances of greatest speakers, from the Attic age to that in which Henry Clay and his compeers lived. Their eloquence is embalmed each in its own language, and is an important element in the literatures of the nations.

A passage from Clay's reply to Randolph's speech on the Tariff, already quoted, may be given as well as any to illustrate his attitude toward the Constitution and the question at issue.

"Our convictions, mutually honest, are equally strong. What is to be done? I invoke that saving spirit of mutual concession under which our blessed Constitution was formed, and under which alone it can be administered. I appeal to the South —

to the high-minded, generous, and patriotic South — with which I have so often coöperated in attempting to sustain the honor and vindicate the rights of our country. Should it not offer upon the altar of the public good some sacrifice of its peculiar opinions? Of what does it complain? A possible temporary enhancement in the objects of consumption. Of what do we complain? A total incapacity to purchase at any price necessary foreign objects of consumption. In such an alternative, inconvenient only to it, but ruinous to us, can we expect too much from Southern magnanimity? To the friends of the tariff I would also anxiously appeal. Every arrangement of its provisions does not suit each of you; you desire some further alterations; you would make it perfect. You want what you will never get. Nothing human is perfect. Let us imitate the illustrious example of the framers of the Constitution and, always remembering that whatever springs from man partakes of his imperfections, depend upon experience to suggest in future the necessary amendments."

The name of John C. Calhoun is naturally recalled next to that of Henry Clay. A graduate of Yale College in 1804, and subsequently a law student in
John C.
Calhoun. Litchfield, he cultivated extemporaneous speaking with great diligence and success. Perhaps as a consequence he was elected to the legislature of his native South Carolina upon his return home, and to Congress after he had been but nine years out of college. Questions arising out of the war of 1812, the national bank, tariff, nullification, and finally of slavery successively occupied his attention. It was a stormy period, when the Republic was adjusting itself to sectional differences of policy, which were not diminished by diversity of opinion between political leaders. But this very antagonism called out the utmost resources of party chiefs and patriots. The battle had to be fought by oral dis-

cussion before the people first as the source of power, and then before their representatives and the executors of their will.

It was before the legislative rather than the popular assembly that Calhoun was at his best. He was more severely logical than impassioned, dignified rather than inspiring. If his premises were accepted, escape from his conclusions was difficult, and there was no suspicion that he was not sincere in his convictions. His earnestness conveyed these to other men with undiminished force. His generalizations were bold, even reckless at times, and his exaggerations were often absurd, as is the case with most orators when overmastered by their purpose. It was then that he became most eloquent. But oftenest the qualities of profundity, solidity, breadth, and clearness chiefly prevailed. A natural logician of analytic temper, he could make his own position strong while exposing the weak points of an adversary's position. Discussing the relations between cause and effect, he was quick to see combinations which were efficient and advantageous.

In the manner and method of his speech he was direct and plain. His thoughts were well arranged in his mind and his resources were at ready command. They usually gathered around a few simple propositions. He often began in a modest and quiet way, but grew loud and shrill in voice and intensely energetic in action as his subject moved him. It was not like the oratory of a Southern speaker so much as of the logical Scotch race from which he was descended. But the causes he advocated had need of demonstrative argument more than the ardor of advocacy and the adornment of imagery. In

Character-
istics.

Congress he had to deal with men in whom the reasoning powers were not lacking and to meet them on their own ground.

The following sentences from his speech on the Force Bill illustrate his political belief and his method of declaring it:

"I go on the ground that this Constitution was made by the States; that it is a federal union of the States, in which the several States still retain their sovereignty. It will be apparent that the question in controversy involves that most deeply important of all political questions, whether ours is a federal or a consolidated government—a question on the decision of which depend the liberty of the people, their happiness, and the place we are destined to hold in the moral and intellectual scale of nations. Never was there a controversy in which more important consequences were involved. One section of the country is the natural guardian of the delegated powers and the other of the reserved, and the struggle on the side of the former will be to enlarge the powers, while that on the opposite side will be to restrain them within their constitutional limits. The contest will be a contest between power and liberty—a contest in which the weaker section, with its peculiar labor productions and institutions, has at stake all that can be dear to freemen. I do not repine that the duty, so difficult to be discharged, of defending the reserved powers against such fearful odds has been assigned to us. To discharge it successfully requires the highest qualities, moral and intellectual, and should we perform it with a zeal and ability proportioned to its magnitude instead of mere planters, our section will become distinguished for its patriots and statesmen. But, on the other hand, if we yield to the steady encroachments of power, the severest calamity and most debasing corruption will overspread the land."

It is interesting after the lapse of two-thirds of a century to observe how far these statesman-prophets divined truly

the outcome of the contests in which they engaged. It is evident that they had many forebodings for the future, but these were always connected with nonconformity to their own political precepts. As this was common even in their own day, there were many gloomy predictions on all sides. The conviction of coming disaster grew stronger and more widespread, but when it came it was not exactly in the manner nor for the reason most frequently and publicly assigned by the orators thus far mentioned. The closer they kept to the enunciation of general principles and general predictions the nearer they were to the final event. When they began to particularize they failed, like all modern prophets. But the prophecies themselves were often sublime and eloquent and a noble part of the literature of the country. They dealt with great and vital themes, and in their composition and utterance were worthy of the vast questions which they discussed.

XXXIV

NORTHERN ORATORS

THE stream of deliberative oratory which had been rising for half a century reached its high-water mark in the eloquence of Daniel Webster. To trace the cause of his preëminence has been the undertaking of one biographer after another, with the repeated admission that the gift of genius for public speech is the best explanation of his surpassing powers. Certainly there were few artificial aids to his success. A farmer's boy attending the district school, Exeter Academy, and Dartmouth College in those days, might have gone back to the farm without so much learning or cultivation as to make him useless as a tiller of New Hampshire soil. On the other hand, he received more than the other two of the trio with whose names his own is always associated, both of native endowment and of acquired education. These possessions he began to turn to account at an early day. First in the inevitable Fourth of July oration which every town listened to once a year, Hanover, New Hampshire, and Fryeburg, Maine, getting the benefit of his earliest efforts, such as they were. Of them and those which closely followed, it can be said that they were better in promise than in performance, and more suited to the inflated tone of the first quarter of the century than to its close. It was an age when anniversary eloquence was accustomed to mount up with wings as eagles.

Webster shed his academic feathers in the years when he came to be associated with the ablest advocates, jurists, and statesmen in New England. From them he learned that an important fact needs little else than clear statement, and that too much adornment is no ornament to a truth. Henceforth his words no longer vaguely conveyed immature conceptions. He found the strength and worth of common words rightly placed. His statement of a case was often a defence in itself, making further discussion almost needless. In homespun English he would talk to twelve jurymen as a man to his neighbors, or as one of them to another about the particular case in their mutual keeping, to see if everything pointed in one direction. It seemed the most natural thing in the world to agree with this most reasonable man, who made his own conclusion appear to be the only possible one to be gathered from every sign and circumstance. The trial of the Keniston brothers and of Joseph White are illustrative instances.

In the superior courts and in the supreme court of the United States he exhibited the larger grasp of principles and a marvellous insight to discuss at once the decisive points of a fact and law. And some-
Forensic
Eloquence.times he added the force of emotional appeal based upon distinctions between right and wrong, not as abstractions, but as vital elements in human conduct. The celebrated Dartmouth College case was an example of such an appeal.

At the age of thirty-one he was sent to Congress. His success in the larger domain of statesmanship was soon a foregone conclusion. The greatness of his intellect had found its adequate field, and to the principles which he

believed most important he devoted his energy and talent. His comprehensive views embraced the welfare of the entire nation ; at the same time he attempted only that which was attainable. On such a practical yet broad basis he stood for that which was national and permanent, rather than sectional and temporary.

In the great debate with Hayne he made it clear to all that the nation is greater than any state and all the states together, a proposition whose truth was subsequently established. The occasion of the second reply was dramatic in the interest, which attended its delivery. The dignitaries of many nations and the notables of our own had assembled to listen to the great constitutional lawyer and orator as he made what, all in all, is regarded as the greatest speech of modern times. There is no room here for even an outline of its four hours of argument and illustration in defence of the principles of the Constitution. It was characterized by fairness toward his opponent, but also by consciousness of strength in his own position. He showed that the origin of this government and the source of its power is with the people, anticipating Lincoln's aphorism in these words, which place the originality of their first utterance where it belongs : " It is, sir, the people's Constitution, the people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people." The entire speech is full of profound reasoning. As he himself said of Samuel Dexter, but with deeper meaning : " Aloof from technicality and unfettered by artificial rule a question of constitutional law gave opportunity for that deep and clear analysis, that mighty grasp of principle which so much dis-

Defence of the
Union and
Constitution.

tinguished his higher efforts. His very statement was argument. His inference seemed demonstration. The earnestness of his own conviction wrought conviction in others. One was convinced because it was gratifying and delightful to think and feel and believe in unison with an intellect of such evident superiority." This was truer of Webster because he was the greater man. The directness of his purpose, the irresistible sweep of his argument, his perspicuity and energy, his vigor of reasoning and felicity of diction, his calm statement and forceful appeal, the power of his voice and the majesty of his presence combined to place him in the foremost ranks of eloquent men and crown him as the chief of American orators.

Halls of legislation have not afforded the only opportunity for the exercise of oratorical gifts. As often as in them our great speakers have found in civic occasions an inspiration to noble and patriotic sentiments. Such were the anniversaries of the landing of the Pilgrims and of the battle of Bunker Hill to Webster, and the orations pronounced by him were masterpieces of commemorative eloquence. These, however, were the by-product of his oratory.

Occasional
Oratory.

The man who made the occasional address almost the business of his life was Edward Everett. First of all, he was a scholar, delivering lectures upon Greek literature in Cambridge and Boston after three years' residence and study abroad. As editor of the "North American Review" he did much to promote a sort of revival of learning period in the country. At the age of thirty he delivered before an immense audience a characteristic address upon "Circumstances Favorable to

Edward
Everett.

the Progress of Literature in America." Contemporary testimony to the marvellous skill and power of the orator is strong. "The sympathies of the audience went with him as he painted in glowing hues the political, social, and literary future of our country, and at the conclusion his hearers were left in a state of emotion far too deep for tumultuous applause." Elected to Congress this very year he became a frequent but not obtrusive debater and distinguished himself in diplomacy; but his proper field was wherever he could address an intelligent assembly on subjects relating to the higher politics or a broader education. He was one of the great educators of the people from the platform in a time when they needed instruction in constitutional liberty — a people who have been said to "present the anomaly of being political in their tastes and habits without having a political education." What colleges now partially supply, the speakers of the former time and their speeches, read in every school, disseminated. Boys came to know them by heart, as they did their catechism, long before they comprehended their meaning.

A similar service was performed by Everett in the direction of a literary style. He furnished a creditable example to follow in the days when imitation of English models was common. It was fortunate that a man of the best attainments could give an object lesson here and there in composition and public speaking. He inspired many men who became distinguished in the last generation by the purity and classic grace of such English as he constructed out of the wealth of his resources. And everywhere and always there was unfailing harmony between the speaker, the subject, and

Oratorical
Art.

the occasion. Symmetry and fitness are constant elements in the high art of his eloquence. His words seem the only ones that exactly correspond to his thoughts, and not a syllable can be spared from the rhythm of his best passages. They are works of art almost as Grecian as those of the Attic orators. Yet he was by no means a mere rhetorician. His good sense kept him from sacrificing everything to form. He knew when to be plain in speech as well as when to be ornate.

The result of a lifetime of such speaking was left in a body of occasional addresses which would have been creditable to any of the Hellenic Ten. Chief among these orations must be reckoned the eulogy upon Washington, delivered upon one hundred and fifty occasions and earning for the Mount Vernon fund \$53,000; to which Everett added \$10,000 more from the earnings of his pen. This production, too, is a work of art, marking the highest reach of eulogistic discourse and illustrating the great advance that had been made from the stilted and fantastic displays of two previous centuries. Other examples by the same author are modestly listed in his works as "Remarks" upon one and another celebrity, as Hallam and Humboldt, Irving and Prescott, Hale and Quincy, Webster and Lincoln, and others. In the address at the consecration of the national cemetery at Gettysburg heroic memories like those of Marathon are revived in the spirit of Periclean eloquence.

Webster and Everett are the two names which stand for supreme achievement in forensic and occasional oratory. Their achievements have become a part of the noblest in our literature, if profound and beautiful thoughts clothed in appropriate language constitute

literature. But the field is wide enough for other speakers also, who, in their several ways, have distinguished themselves and contributed to the volume of what has been both written and spoken.

Rufus Choate was the third in the order of time. Preëminently an advocate, he was moreover a man of letters and always a student of subjects outside his profession. On such topics he was eloquent with constructive power and manifold art. In the technicalities of disposing material for unity, of proportion and harmony, of the illumination by imagery, he showed the hand of a master. Had he confined his efforts to literary, social, and political subjects, he would have been preëminent as an instructor of the people from the platform. Such addresses as that on "The Eloquence of Revolutionary Periods" and similar ones growing out of our early history are alive with instruction and inspiration. In their time they contributed to the stock of controlling ideas which have gone with the New Englander into every part of the land, and have helped to make the nation what it is and to prevent it becoming what as yet it is not.

Charles Sumner's academic orations, as apart from his political and congressional speeches, will always have a charm for scholarly persons who delight in observing how the spoils of classical literature can be woven into the fabric of modern discourse. This was the habit of our scholars as far back as the pre-Revolution age and before, but in a crude and clumsy way. Sumner conformed more nearly to an Augustan manner, and as a noble Roman might have followed a Greek example. Opulence of learning is everywhere

apparent. He who can trace all this orator's allusions will have had a liberal education. History and mythology, fiction and the drama, the poets and orators of every country, made his discourse a cloth of gold and gems in its barbaric splendor. Within the turning of a leaf are contributions from Plutarch and Livy, Homer and Dante, Virgil and the Troubadour, Hobbes and Sir Thomas Browne, Bacon and Vattel. Another turn brings up Hesiod and Anacreon, Herodotus and Froissart, Sismondi, Montesquieu, Liutprand and Muratori, the dicta of the Christian Fathers, the superstitions of mediæval doctors, the sayings of Brantôme, Malte-Brun and Mme. Sévigné. Such wealth of illustration was poured forth with lavish hand upon his addresses, entitled "The True Grandeur of Nations," "The Employment of Time" and "White Slavery in the Barbary States." A similar opulence characterizes his deliberative oratory in Congress, but its appropriate sphere was the academic occasion.

Wendell Phillips was more severely Greek in his apparently extemporaneous lectures than most men are in their written discourse. There was no hint of memorizing and no hesitation or haste in ^{Wendell Phillips.} his delivery. Conversational in the tones of his voice, but never colloquial in diction, he carried his auditors on the steady, irresistible flow of his speech to conclusions against which their common sense sometimes rebelled when they came to themselves. In subsequent years they discovered that the tide of events had drifted them to the positions to which he had led them as in a dream in the days when they had called him hard names. But the memory of his speech, unaccountable in its power,

will always remain with the generation that came under its magic spell.

George William Curtis, as both orator and journalist, represents the combination of the two methods of instructing and influencing the populace. Some would say the transition from one to the other, the surrender of the platform to the press, but the abdication is not yet complete enough to warrant this assertion. Throughout his life Curtis was an accomplished speaker, as well as an able and skilful editor, and may still stand for the union of voice and pen in forming popular sentiment. He began with academic addresses to the youth who were going out from college into the responsibilities of citizenship. In 1856 he delivered a characteristic Commencement oration on "The Duty of the American Scholar to Politics and the Times." It was a topic on which he often spoke and wrote in after years, verging more and more toward political duties as the interests at stake became momentous in war time. But he also remained the scholar in his conduct of periodicals of which he was editor and in the addresses which he left his office to go out and make from time to time, sometimes in places of personal danger from an excited mob. Then he was the man of unflinching courage, often turning the yells of faction into shouts of enthusiastic applause before he finished. The reserve forces of such a man and others who stemmed the fury of audiences in that stormy time belong to the inspirations of literary biography. They illustrate the fact that the heroism which faces an angry crowd alone and unprotected may be as true as that which is found in the ranks of soldiery. Incidentally, also, is exhibited the power of the human mind and voice and presence over the wayward,

George Wil-
liam Curtis.

headstrong multitude which nothing else can control. Certainly the transcript of such words of power ought to be reckoned among the treasures of literature. If so, the utterances of our own orators are among the best examples of American letters.

XXXV

LOCAL FICTION

THE Civil War, like the two which preceded it, had no immediate effect upon our literature. Some of the older writers were drawn aside for an occasional poem, address, or magazine article upon some phase of the contest, but the few books of note published between 1861 and 1865, inclusive, were not out of the usual course of production in fiction, travel, biography, and history. Immediately after the war there was little to indicate that its turmoil had greatly disturbed the literary atmosphere. A few war stories and many war papers sprung up like new weeds after a forest fire, precursors of a later growth of military history, biography, and romance. But in the main older authors returned to the familiar ruts, and younger ones, with a few exceptions, did not drive far afield.

Meantime, as the last third of the century wore on, readers multiplied exceedingly. The mid-century writers had created a literature which educated the nation to a taste for the best. Peace and returning prosperity brought leisure and means to gratify it, stimulating the demand for more than the Cambridge group or any other could supply. New aspirants appeared and were encouraged by new publishing enterprises. Some of them were passed on to seats among the mighty; more of them had their little day and fell out of the procession.

It would be strange if a few were not conspicuous when so many felt called to write. Authors now becoming classic who were finishing their work had come out of no such swarms of competitors. On the other hand, the throng of latter-day penmen sent no such representatives to the front. Had an age of reflection and criticism set in as usual after one of original production? Certainly one of demand had arrived: first for fiction. A busy and anxious day was over, and like children everybody was saying, "Tell us a story."

Some of the earliest were written by a young man of great promise who fell in the first battle of the war. Theodore Winthrop of New York could count seven presidents of Yale among his ancestors besides

Theodore
Winthrop.

Jonathan Edwards of Princeton, and the younger Winthrop, the well-read first governor of Connecticut. It would not have been like Theodore to fall back upon his forefathers, but literary tastes do not die out, even if they skip a generation now and then. They blossomed early in this one. Scholarships and prizes came to him in college with the habit of composition and of story-telling with the pen. Yet he waited long for recognition. It was just beginning to be accorded when he wrote a description of the march of the Seventh Regiment of New York to Washington. For him this was a leave-taking of a promising career and a march to a heroic death. Then readers began to call for anything he had written and laid away until the time of appreciation should come. Five books were published in rapid succession. "Cecil Dreeme" was the first, a story of bohemian life in and around the old university building in New York city, such as a graduate student might work into the chinks of more pretentious study — if he had the

rare ability. Then came "John Brent," the outgrowth of a run through California and Oregon as far as Puget Sound. It was in the manner of mountain and prairie fiction, which when well done never loses its charm for either American or English readers. This example of it belongs to the best of its class, and is a graphic picture of roving life on the plains in the days of the Indian and the emigrant, the buffalo, and the wild horse. Other outdoor books of this breezy man are the "Canoe and Saddle" and "Life in the Open Air," wholesome sketches for boys of all ages, books to read in camp on rainy days or at home when the woods are full of mosquitoes and malaria. There is no malaria in these volumes, and their place is with the balsamic books of healthful adventure which are doing much to counteract the overstudious and commercial tendencies of our time.

Edward Eggleston wrote of frontier life in the nearer West of Indiana, before successive waves of emigration had crossed the plains. "The Hoosier School-master," "The Circuit Rider," "The End of the World," "The Mystery of Metropolisville" and half a dozen other stories will preserve the features of early western life in all its hardship, poverty, and aspiration. They are the annals of pathbreakers in a wilderness where a bare existence was nearly all that could be attained, narrow and meagre at that. But pioneers must go before those who easily follow, and their work is not to be despised because it was done in narrow lines, heavily and drearily. The honor they deserve is greater than the mirth they provoke.

Francis Bret Harte was a portrayer of something rougher than prairie life. The half-civilized conditions which

sprung up after the rush to California in '49 found in him a faithful chronicler. A new and fresh field was pre-empted by an enterprising prospector. He had been preceded by Bayard Taylor in his "Eldorado" and "Rhymes of Travel," who drove a stake or two and passed on. In twenty years mining camps and towns became a feature of remote American enterprise, and in the pages of the "Overland Monthly," started in 1868, the editor, who had been miner, schoolmaster, and compositor in turn, began to depict what he had seen. After his introduction to the public in the "Condensed Novels" and "Poems," his "Heathen Chinees" created an immense demand for more of the new brand. That "childlike and bland" son of the morning in successful rivalry with western sharpers was a picture to amuse anybody who could call himself eastern, though he should hail from Salt Lake. No one but Truthful James and Bill Nye could keep a sober face at —

"The hands that were played
By that heathen Chinees
And the points that he made
Were frightful to see,
Till at last he put down a right bower
Which the same Nye had dealt unto me.

"Then I looked up at Nye
And he gazed upon me;
And he rose with a sigh
And said: 'Can this be?
We are ruined by Chinese cheap labor,'
And he went for that heathen Chinees."

"The Luck of Roaring Camp," "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," and "Tennessee's Partner" exhibit the best that was left in the rough-and-tumble life which miners and des-

peradoes were leading on the hills and in the gulches. Generosity, chivalry, and a quick sense of justice held their own amid drunkenness, gambling, and murder. It was a return to primitive existence and the primitive code of every man for himself until threatened extinction compelled herding for self-preservation. Such revival of primeval barbarism could not last long, but the aspects of its transitory life were caught as with a snapshot and handed to the world to illustrate a short chapter of history, which itself is repeated on a smaller scale upon every fresh discovery of gold in the earth.

A picture of a different life in southern California is given in Helen Hunt Jackson's "Ramona," a story of the Mexican and the Indian, the mission and the priest. Also of "appropriation" by white men of the land belonging to the old inhabitants, under the decree of San Francisco courts, according to the ancient and honorable maxim that might makes right — cattle and horses to be thrown in to pay the costs for stealing the land with the forms of legality. It was one of the economies of a paternal government, reminding one of the "teeth money" which the Turks used to extort from Christians to pay for the wear and tear to Mohammedan jaws in eating provisions taken from the weaker party. The same one-sided generosity toward the white man was set forth in a previous book by the same author entitled "A Century of Dishonor" — a contrast to the dealings of the first settlers with the Indians along the Atlantic seaboard.

From southern California the literary wanderer may travel over the plains to New Orleans to find the next picture of local life in descriptions of Louisiana creoles by

George W. Cable. They remind the reader of the occupation of the mouth of the Mississippi by the French when they followed the great waterways from Canada to the Gulf in the last years of the seventeenth century, and of the tossing of the colony back and forth between France and Spain until it was sold by Bonaparte to the United States for \$15,000,000. Meantime the mixture of races developed a phase of life and character as unique and distinct as the Hebrew, and as far removed from the Northern type as the Gulf of Mexico from Massachusetts Bay. Of this singular people Cable has been the interpreter to the country in a series of novels whose very titles indicate a new discovery of old relics. "Old Creole Days," "The Grandissimes," "Mme. Delphine," "Dr. Sevier," "The Creoles of Louisiana," and others of kindred sound suggest a tropical, languorous, half-foreign existence, an exotic from southern Europe, and more southern Africa, transplanted to the old French and Spanish town two hundred years ago, and keeping its distinctive features through all the changes in government and fortune that have gone on in and around the ancient city. It was another of the rich and unoccupied fields of the continent which none but one born on the spot could find and cultivate with success. None but a brave and conscientious artist could reveal its treasures to the delight of all the nation and the ultimate satisfaction of the peculiar people themselves. The drowsy land in which they dwell is a land of cypress shadows, of blazing sunlight, of crimson and purple, of broad bayou and majestic river; and there are oriental aspects in the life which is lived amid all this splendor of color and luxuriance of climate. It is a remnant of Romance civiliza-

George W.
Cable.

tion from the old world brought into the new, that the inheritance of this country from all the empires may be complete.

Turning northward and eastward, the Georgia negro sketches of Joel Chandler Harris bring the brighter side of plantation life to the front in the wonderful stories of Uncle Remus about Br'er Fox and Br'er Rabbit, with all the lore of four-footed tribes that were their familiars. The cunning craft and the dry humor and the instinctive wisdom which appear to be shared by beast and negro together as their common heritage in lives that were not far apart in aims and sympathy, are endless sources of interest and amusement to children of all ages. The element of dialect which belongs to every local story has here its lion's share of importance, with the advantage in favor of him who knows how to reproduce it faithfully, distinguishing the leader from the second-rate imitator, who yet by his imitation pays tribute to the original writer. This is the penalty of originality, visited on both writer and reader. No sooner does a good thing appear than there is soon too much of it, and the dialect story is manifolded by every writer who mistakes distortion of good English for the patois of the district, whether it be in Maine or Florida. The counterfeit of one section may be passed for genuine far away in another, but the home-born know the difference and approve the true artist and advertise him.

Such an artist is found as one drifts northward into Tennessee. She was known for a time on the title-pages of her books as "Charles Egbert Craddock," now as Mary Noailles Murfree, the word painter of sunshine and storm, of morning and

Mary
Noailles
Murfree.

evening, of summer and winter and their ceaseless transformations in the Cumberland Mountains. Here is color and every glad and gloomy shade of it from noontide to midnight, from the roses of June to the drifts of December, from cloudless blue to the blackness of the tempest. A patient and faithful observer of the wilderness and a diligent student of language has discovered the correspondences between the two as between sky and lake and has made the one mirror the other. And against this majestic background of mountains she has drawn scattered and lonely clans of hill people dwelling apart from valley towns and the travelled highways, pursuing their narrow ideals and faint aspirations with meagre desires and slender hopes. Yet in all the poverty and stupor of a dwarfed existence are found the same emotions and virtues and vices that belong to lowlanders. It is the manner of their expression that interests, strange as the modes of life in the towering hills, singular and sometimes as grotesque as the Bœotian dialect they speak. But there is life enough for stories of rare interest and power in the hands of the writer who has taken up this lonely "claim." Comedy may be the prevailing sentiment for the reader about a unique people, but there is plenty of tragedy in the mountain air as sudden and violent as its own terrific thunderstorms. Once more titles reveal the spirit of the stories, "Drifting Down Lost Creek" and the rest of the first series; "Where the Battle Was Fought," "Down the Ravine," "The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains," "In the Clouds," "The Story of Keedon Bluffs," "The Despot of Broomsedge Cove," "The Stranger People's Country," "The Phantom of the Footbridge," "His Vanished Star," and others. Together they

picture a region and a people which remind the reader of the vast diversity of life and scenery that belongs to a great nation.

Across the Virginia line John Esten Cooke reproduced the days of the Revolution and of the Civil War in two series of stories which caught the manner of each age and portrayed the conditions of life which prevailed in each in the Old Dominion. They belong, however, to a bygone style, and help to indicate the change which has come over the fashion in novel writing. Sentiment has not passed away, but it is now seldom sentimental.

Mary Johnston, in writing about an earlier period on the same ground, has reproduced the romantic side of colonial life in strong colors under the titles of "Prisoners of Hope," "To Have and to Hold," and "Audrey," books which have been so generally read and widely commented upon as to make further mention superfluous. Instead it may be remarked that the succession of writers that have been mentioned may be regarded as representing different classes of American citizens occupying so many sections of a broad belt-line through the West and along the Pacific, the Gulf, and Atlantic coasts up to the national capital.

Of New England peculiarities and dialect there have been many portrayals. Given to literary enterprises the province has not failed to ransack its own neighborhood to find material for fiction. The back country has been as thoroughly explored for quaint characters and queer words as for old clocks and chairs. Hard and sharp men and women, clinging to remote traditions and mispronunciations, not because they do

John Esten
Cooke.

New England
Writers.

not know better, but for fear of being inconsistent and new-fangled, have been shown up in striking contrast to shiftless neighbors who have been born tired of the two-century strain after primness. No one has done this better than Miss Wilkins in her books and sketches of a frosty life, which she did not have to go far to find. A richer and more mellow town life has been depicted in appropriate colors by Miss Jewett in numerous books, which exhibit the variety that exists in character, cultivation, and manner of living in a province which is fast becoming unprovincial. This larger life, dealing with vital issues and progressive ideas, enters into the work of other writers who deserve more extended mention, notably Rose Terry Cooke, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Louisa May Alcott, and others beside.

So also in all the circuit of prairie, coast, and mountain there are writers who stand near the great colorists that have been enumerated, each depicting the group he knows best, and all contributing to a wide and picturesque view of cosmopolitan life on the continent. Fireside travellers may traverse it from the northern lakes to the southern gulf and from ocean to ocean in a local fiction, which has been made so faithful to scenery, dialect, and character that the wide reader should know any state if carried into it blindfolded as soon as he has eyes to see and ears to hear. He might not be as certain of his ground as the Nantucket skipper was of "Marm Hackett's garden," but he ought to "guess" or "allow" or "reckon" where he is within five hundred miles, when he hears these provincialisms and others like them. A few samples of soil are offered on which the reader of local fiction can test his skill.

"Morton was conducted three miles down the river to a log tavern, that being a public and appropriate place for the rendering of the decisions of Judge Lynch, and affording, moreover, the convenient refreshment of whisky and tobacco to those who might become exhausted in their arduous labors on behalf of public justice. There was no formal trial. The evidence was given in a disjointed and spontaneous fashion; the jury was composed of the whole crowd, and what the Quakers call the 'sense of the meeting' was gathered from the general outcry.

"As for Morton, nothing could be much clearer than that he was one of the gang. The settler who had refused him a lodging first spoke:

" ' You see, I seed in three winks that the feller didn't own the hoss. He looked kinder sheepish. Well, I poked a few questions at him and I reckon I am the beaten'est man to ax questions in this neck of timber. I axed him whar he come from, and he let it out that he 'd rid more'n fifty miles. And I kinder blazed away at praisin' his hoss tell I got him off his guard, and then, unbeknownst to him I treed him suddenly. I jest axed him if the hoss was his'n and he hemmed and hawed and says, says he: " Well, not exactly mine." Then I tole him to putt out.' "

The imminent hanging-bee was dispersed by a circuit-riding preacher passing that way. Accordingly the story can be dropped and the scene shifted westward to be set by another author.

"It was a vast level where we were riding. The soil was disintegrated, igneous rock, fine and well beaten down. Not a bird sang in the hot noon; not a cricket chirped. No sound except the beat of our horses' hoofs on the pavement. We rode side by side, taking our strides together over the sere brown plain on our gallop to save and to slay. It came on afternoon, as we rode on steadily. Now in the broken country, a cayote or two scuttled away as we passed. Over the edge of a slope a herd of antelopes appeared. Pausing for curiosity, they saw that we fled

and they came careering after us for a mile or more until we left their gambolling play far behind. We came upon a wide tract covered with wild sage bushes. It checked our speed and chafed our horses. A little pathway in the sage bushes suddenly opened before me. I dashed on a hundred yards in advance of my comrades. What was this? Hoof-marks in the dust! The trail! the trail!

"We were ascending now all the time into subalpine regions. We crossed great sloping savannas, deep in dry, rustling grass, where a nation of cattle might pasture. We plunged through broad wastes of hot sand. We clattered across stony arroyos, longing thirstily for the gush of water that had flowed there not many months before. Down in the shady Alley evening had come before its time. The blue sky was overhead, the red sun upon the castellated walls a thousand feet above us, the purpling chasm opened before. Over the slippery rocks, over the sheeny pavement, loose stones, barricades, down, up, on, always on, went the horses, we clinging as we might. Between the ring of the hoofs I heard a whisper, 'We are there.' There they were — the murderers!"

Now across a mountain range and into another story.

"The cabins of the settlement were already behind the bluff; the little stream which indicated the 'bar' now and then rang out quite clearly at their feet. They were quite alone. The major sat down on a boulder, and pointed to another. He continued confidently: 'Now, look here, Tom, I want to leave this cursed hole and get clear of the State; over the Oregon line into British Columbia, or to the coast, where I can get a coasting vessel down to Mexico. It will cost money, but I've got it. It will cost a lot of risks, but I'll take them. Help to put me on the other side of the border line, and I'll give you a thousand dollars down *before we start* and a thousand dollars when I'm safe.'

"The half-breed had changed his slouching attitude. It seemed more indolent on account of the loosely hanging strap that had

once held his haversack, which was still worn in a slovenly fashion over his shoulder as a kind of lazy sling for his shiftless hand.

“ ‘ Well, Tom, is it a go ? You can trust *me*, for you ’ll have the thousand in your pocket before you start. And I can trust you, for I ’ll kill you quicker than lightning if you say a word of this to any one before I go, or play a single trick on me afterwards.’ ”

“ Suddenly the two men were rolling over and over in the underbrush. The half-breed had thrown himself upon the major, bearing him to the ground. The haversack strap for an instant whirled like the loop of a lasso in the air, and descended over the major’s shoulders, pinioning his arms to his side.

“ Then the half-breed stripped off his waist belt, and as dexterously slipped it over the ankles of the struggling man. There was no trace of triumph or satisfaction in his face, which wore the same lowering look of disgust, as he gazed upon the prostrate man.

“ ‘ Who are you ? ’ said the major, pantingly.

“ ‘ I ’m the new sheriff of Siskyou ! That ’s my warrant ! — you ’ve seen it afore. It ’s just the same as t’other sheriff had — what you shot.’ ”

Turning coastwise and southward another view is presented.

“ There was every reason in the world why the Señora should be thus warmly attached to the Franciscan Order. From her earliest recollections the gray gown and cowl had been familiar to her eyes, and had represented the things which she was taught to hold most sacred and dear. . . . The right tower of the Mission Church had just been completed, and it was arranged that the consecration of this tower should take place at the time of her wedding, and that her wedding feast should be spread in the long outside corridor. The whole country, far and near, was bid. The feast lasted three days ; open tables to everybody ; singing, dancing, eating, and making merry. The

Indians came in bands, singing songs and bringing gifts. On the third day the young Señora and her bridegroom, still in their wedding attire and bearing lighted candles, walked with the monks in procession, round and round the new tower, the ceremony seeming to all devout beholders to give a blessed consecration to the union of the young pair as well as to the newly completed tower. General Moreno was much beloved by both army and Church. And now by taking as his bride the daughter of a distinguished officer, and the niece of the Superior of the Mission he had linked himself anew to the two dominant powers and interests of the country."

This is a glimpse of a primitive paradise. The following is an intimation of its loss by the original possessors :

" ' If there are Americans who are good, who will not cheat and kill, why do they not send after these robbers and punish them ? And how is it that they make laws which cheat ? It was the American law which took Temecula away from us and gave it to those men ! The law was on the side of thieves. No, Majella, it is a people that steals ! That is their name — a people that steals, and that kills for money. Is not that a good name for a great people to bear, when they are like the sands in the sea, they are so many ? "

The next station is on the Gulf of Mexico.

" After that day and night, the prospect grew less repellent. A gradually matured conviction that New Orleans would not be found standing on stilts in the quagmire, enabled the eye to become educated to a better appreciation of the solemn landscape. Nor was the landscape always solemn. There were long openings now and then to right and left of emerald green savannah, with the dazzling blue of the Gulf far beyond, waving a thousand white-handed good-byes as the funereal swamps slowly shut out again the horizon. How sweet the soft breezes off the moist prairies ! How weird, how very near, the crimson and green and black and yellow sunsets ! How dream-like the land and the great, whispering river !

"The sun is once more setting upon the Place d'Armes. Once more the shadows of cathedral and town-hall lie athwart the pleasant grounds where again the city's fashion and beauty sit about in the sedate Spanish way, or stand or slowly move in and out among the old willows and along the white walks.

"It was in the Théâtre St. Philipe, in the month of September and in the year 1803. Under the twinkle of numberless candles, and in a perfumed air thrilled with the wailing ecstasy of violins, the little Creole capital's proudest and best were offering up the first cool night of the languidly departing summer to the divine Terpsichore. For summer there, bear in mind, is a loitering gossip, that only begins to talk of leaving when September rises to go. It was like hustling her out, to give a select *bal masqué* at such a very early date; but it was fitting that something should be done for the sick and the destitute; and why not this? Everybody knows the Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

Turning northward after the war, it has been said that —

"Very few Southern country towns have been more profitably influenced by the new order of things than Hillsborough, in Middle Georgia. At various intervals since the war it has had what the local weekly calls a 'business boom.' The old tavern has been torn down, and in its place stands a new three-story brick hotel, managed by a very brisk young man, who is shrewd enough to advertise in the newspapers of the neighboring towns that he has 'special accommodations and special rates for commercial travellers.' . . .

"In 1850 there were a great many things in Hillsborough likely to puzzle a stranger. The young men, no matter how young they might be, were absorbed in politics. They had the political history of the country at their tongues' ends, and the discussions they carried on were interminable. This interest extended to all classes: the planters discussed politics with their overseers; and lawyers, merchants, tradesmen, and gentlemen of elegant leisure, discussed politics with each other. Schoolboys

knew all about the Missouri Compromise, the fugitive slave law, and States Rights. Sometimes the arguments used were more substantial than words, but this was only when some old feud was back of the discussion. There was one question in regard to which there was no discussion. That question was slavery. It loomed up everywhere and in everything, and was the basis of all arguments, and yet it was not discussed: there was no room for discussion. . .

"Uncle Abner belonged to the poorer class of planters. 'You take all your men,' Uncle Abner was saying, 'take all un 'em but gimme Hennery Clay. Them abolishioners, they may come an git all six er my niggers, if they 'll jes but lemme keep the ginnywine ole Whig docterin. That's me up an' down — that's wher' your uncle Abner Lazenberry stan's, boys. Lord, I've seed sights wi' them niggers. They hain't no manner account. They won't work, an' I'm oblige to feed 'em, else they'd whirl in an' steal from the neighbors. Hit's in-about broke me for to maintain 'em in the'r laziness.' . . .

"'Well, well!' said Uncle Abner, tapping the ground thoughtfully with his cane. 'A mighty fur ways Vermont is, tooby shore. In my day an' time I've seed as many as three men folks from Vermont, an' one un 'em, he wuz a wheelwright, an' one wuz a tin-peddler, an' the yuther one wuz a clock maker. But that wuz a long time ago. How is the abolishioners gittin on up that away, an' when in the name er patience is they a-comin arter my niggers? Lord! if them niggers wuz free, I would n't have to slave for 'em.' "

Still farther northward —

"The shadows were beginning to creep slowly up the slopes of the Great Smoky Mountains, as if they came from the depths of the earth. A roseate suffusion idealized range and peak to the east. Ah! and the air was so clear! The sun, its yellow blaze burned out, and now a sphere of smouldering fire, was dropping down behind Chilhowee, royally purple, richly dark. Wings were in the air, and every instinct homeward. An

eagle, with a shadow scurrying through the valley like some forlorn Icarus that might not soar, swept high over the landscape. Above all rose the great 'bald,' still splendidly illumined with the red glamour of the sunset, and holding its uncovered head so loftily against the sky that it might seem it had bared its brow before the majesty of heaven.

"When the 'men folks,' great, gaunt, bearded, jeans-clad fellows, stood in the shed-room and gazed at the splintered door upon the floor, it was difficult to judge what was the prevailing sentiment, so dawdling, so uncommunicative, so inexpressive of gesture were they.

" 'We knowed ez thar war strangers prowlin' roun', ' said the master of the house when he had heard his mother's excited account of the events of the day. 'We war a startin' home ter dinner, an' seen thar beastises hitched thar a-nigh the trough. An' I 'lowed ez mebbe they might be the revenue devils, so I jes' made the boys lay low. An' Sol war set ter watch, an' he gin the word when they hed rid away.'

"Nothing more was said on the subject until after supper, when they were all sitting, dusky shadows, on the little porch, where the fireflies sparkled and the vines fluttered, and one might look out and see the new moon, in the similitude of a silver boat, sailing down the western skies, off the headlands of Chilhowee."

Next in colonial Virginia —

"The afternoon sunshine lay hot upon the house and garden of Verney Manor—the leaves drooped motionless, the glare of white paths hurt the eye, the flowers all seemed to be red. The odor of the rose and honeysuckle was drowned in the heavy, cloying sweetness of the pendant masses of locust bloom. Down in the garden the bees droned in the vines, and on the steps the flies buzzed undisturbed about the sleeping hounds. Above the long, deserted wharf and the green velvet of the marshes quivered the heated air, while to look upon the water was like gazing too closely at blue flame. From the tobacco fields floated the notes of a monotonous

many-versed chant, and a soft, uninterrupted cooing came from the dove cot. Heat and fragrance and drowsy sound combined to give a pleasant somnolence to the wide sunny scene.

"Deep in the cavernous shade of the porch lounged the master of the plantation, his body in one chair, his legs in another, and a silver tankard of sack standing upon a third, over the back of which had been flung his great peruke and his riding coat of green cloth, discarded because of the heat. Thin blue clouds curled up from his long pipe, and obscured his ruddy countenance.

"His shrewd gray eyes under thin tufts of grizzled hair were half closed in a lazy contentment, born of the hour, the pipe, and the drink. The world went very well just then, in Colonel Verney's estimation. Trader, planter, magistrate, member of the council of state, soldier, author on occasion, and fine gentleman all rolled into one, after the fashion of the times; Cavalier of Cavaliers, hand in glove with Governor Berkeley, and possessed of a beautiful daughter, for whose favor half of the young gentlemen of the counties of York and Gloucester were ready to draw rapier on the other half, — Colonel Verney's world was a fair and stirring one, and gave him plentiful food for meditation on a fine afternoon."

In New England —

"There was a full moon that night. About nine o'clock Louisa strolled down the road a little way. There were harvest fields on either hand, bordered by low stone walls. Luxuriant clumps of bushes grew beside the wall, and trees — wild cherry and old apple trees — at intervals. Presently Louisa sat down on the wall and looked about her with mildly sorrowful reflectiveness. Tall shrubs of blueberry and meadow-sweet, all woven together and tangled with blackberry vines and horse-briars, shut her in on either side. She had a little clear space between them. Opposite her on the other side of the road was a spreading tree; the moon shone between its boughs, and the leaves twinkled like silver. The road was bespread with a beautiful shifting of dapple of silver and shadow; the air was

full of a mysterious sweetness. 'I wonder if it is wild grapes?' murmured Louisa. She sat there some time. She was just thinking of rising, when she heard footsteps and low voices, and remained quiet.

"'Well,' said Joe Dagget [Louisa's lover], 'you've made up your mind, then, I suppose?'"

"'Yes,' returned another voice; 'I'm going day after to-morrow.'"

"'That's Lily Dyer,' thought Louisa.

"A girl full of calm rustic strength and bloom, with a masterful way which might have beseemed a princess.

"'Well,' said Joe Dagget, 'I ain't got a word to say.'"

"'I don't know what you could say,' returned Lily Dyer.

"'I ain't sorry,' he began at last, 'that that happened yesterday—that we kind of let on how we felt to each other. I guess it's just as well we knew. Of course, I can't do anything different. I'm going right on an' get married next week. I ain't going back on a woman that's waited for me fourteen years, an' break her heart.'"

"'If you should jilt her to-morrow, I would n't have you,' spoke up the girl, with sudden vehemence. 'Honor's honor, an' right's right. An' I'd never think anything of any man that went against 'em for me or any other girl; you'd find that out, Joe Dagget.'"

"'Well I hope you would n't, God knows I do. And—I hope—one of these days—you'll—come across somebody else—'"

"'I don't see any reason why I should n't.'"

"Suddenly her tone changed. She spoke in a sweet, clear voice, so loud that she could have been heard across the street.

"'No, Joe Dagget,' said she, 'I'll never marry any other man as long as I live. I've got good sense, an' I ain't going to break my heart nor make a fool of myself; but I'm never going to be married, you can be sure of that. I ain't the sort of girl to feel this way twice.'"

"Louisa heard an exclamation and a soft commotion behind the bushes; then Lily spoke again—the voice sounded as

if she had risen. 'This must be put a stop to,' said she. 'We 've stayed here long enough. I'm going home.'

"Louisa never mentioned Lily Dyer to him. She simply told Joe that while she had no cause of complaint against him, she had lived so long in one way that she shrank from making a change."

The titles of books from which these characteristic extracts are taken have not been given here, as the ordinary reader of American fiction may be interested in placing the sketches for himself. But as he glances over these variegated patches of color on the borders of the national domain and recalls the vast territory encircled by its boundaries, the diversity of its scenery and modes of life will be forced upon him. The next reflection will be upon the unity which encompasses and binds together all this variety of race and dialect into an individual people having common interests and purposes; and then the conviction will follow that more and more as facilities for intercommunication and interchange of views increase will sectional differences disappear and be replaced by a growing identity of speech and dominant ideas.

XXXVI

OTHER PHASES OF FICTION

THE writers of fiction mentioned in the last chapter nearly exhausted local fields of the present time in the United States. What they left has been cleaned up by followers and imitators. The Indian, the mining camp, the Spanish mission, the creole, the negro in several shades, the mountaineer, and the Yankee will yield nothing new for the present generation. Leading novelists saw this some time ago and cast about for fresh material.

Historic
Fiction.

Some found it in foreign fields and in times that have become historic. Mrs. Catherwood and Gilbert Parker, when a Canadian, following the lead of Parkman, the historian, found the old régime in Canada nearest home in place and time. "The Romance of Dollard," "The Lady of Fort St. John," and seven other volumes are the work of a novelist who found a rich vein of romance in the French and English struggle for supremacy in North America. Parker has found a similar "lead" in the old cities on the St. Lawrence in the days of Louis XIV., of which his "Seats of the Mighty" furnishes a good example of his interesting method in historical fiction.

General Lew Wallace went back nineteen centuries for his "Ben-Hur: a Tale of Christ," and to the Orient for the setting of a story which has been read by more people than any other during the last twenty years. He has had

competitors in a field which will be turned over again and again as long as the gospel is read, but no single writer has lent so much new interest to the old familiar story. As far back as 1837 William Ware was a pioneer of eastern romance in his "Zenobia" and "Aurelian" and "Julian," but later writers have made proportionate progress in oriental fiction.

The cosmopolitan American, Marion Crawford, has found material for his novels in India and Italy, in Arabia and Austria, in Europe and America at large.

Twenty-five books in twelve years are the product of a diligent and rapid writer. If all are not of equal interest and worth, the choice of them is large enough to satisfy the ordinary reader, who will begin, perhaps, with "Saracinesca" and end when he is tired or desires a change. The same must be said of other voluminous novelists. There are too many authors to be read to let any one of them monopolize attention. Quality tells for more than quantity since Cooper's laudable attempt to provide stories for a nation in a time of comparative scarcity. But when the years of plenty came, readers began to grow fastidious and to pick only the best, among which are several of Crawford's novels, especially those grouped about the one mentioned above and the oriental "Zoroaster."

Foreign
Subjects.

From fiction of remote times and lands one may turn to that which is nearer home but yet international. Such are the fabrics that have been woven out of Anglo-American material with ocean steamships for shuttles. Travellers back and forth find that the Anglican family is essentially one, notwithstanding incidental squabbles between the older and

Anglo-
American
Novelists.

younger children, and that Americans are more at home in London than in Paris. Some of them have domiciled in the English metropolis long enough to set forth with tolerable justice the traits of both branches of the Saxon race, incurring at the same time the charge of emphasizing unfortunate peculiarities. Henry James, Jr., is the most prominent of this class. Educated abroad from his twelfth year in Paris, Boulogne, Geneva, and Bonn, he came to know European literatures and social life at an early day. This knowledge has become intimate by subsequent residence in foreign capitals, and is added to that inherited acquaintance with his own country which a native cannot easily shake off, even if he has the inclination. Besides, there are always enough Americans abroad as tourists or residents to keep an exiled fellow citizen reminded of the progress the nation is making. This is sufficient to save him great mortification, unless it be at his own withdrawal from his home and country. But there are always people in every country who can easily become acclimated in another, and where there is one American living constantly in foreign lands there are ten thousand foreigners here who have no desire to return to the conditions they left behind them.

The chief regret concerning our American authors who have become aliens from their native country is, that instead of representing its best they sometimes
Caricature. choose to caricature its worst. In this they are able to outdo the superficial foreigner who goes through "the states" in a bee line for San Francisco and returns by way of Vancouver, Manitoba, and Montreal. What an American-born foreigner says of the best at home will always be taken with a grain of salt, but his portrayal of

the worst will be implicitly and gladly believed. In this our native critics resident in Europe have not the excuse that the home-staying censors have — namely, to correct and educate their neighbors, as Holmes and Lowell did. If the schoolmaster must stay abroad, let him confine his attention to dispelling the abundant ignorance he finds there about his native land, beginning with its geography and grammar and ending with its institutions. Lesser matters relating to the joyous and elastic spirits of its young people, and their startling freedom from conventionalities and traditions that have descended through oppressive centuries in Europe can be slurred over. Even the aspirations of ambitious older people are better than sluggish submission to inherited limitations. The international novelist has great opportunities for cultivating the knowledge which produces amity between nations, but it is not the best way of accomplishing this end to descend to the ludicrous exhibition of minor differences and eccentricities.

The apology for this microscopical treatment rests in part upon a realistic theory of portraiture. Things must be reported with photographic exactness and minuteness of detail. Formerly a character was indicated by broad lines or by suggestive revelations of mental states. If a somewhat general and indefinite conception resulted, there was room for ideal reconstruction by each reader according to his personal bias. In the inevitable change of literary fashion a time came when generalities would not do for leading writers. It was no longer satisfactory to say that the heroine had brown hair and an abundance of it. How it was dressed became an equally important question. And if the hero was said to wear a blue necktie, could that broad statement

In the Inter-
est of
Realism.

satisfy any reader who ever stood before the endless varieties of neckwear in a haberdasher's window? What depths of infamy might be possible to the wearer of a made tie, and how irreproachable must that youth be who is up to the latest fad in knot and color! And then there is the all-prevailing element of tobacco smoke in modern fiction; how is it produced by a given character? From pipe, cigar, or cigarette? And how are these held, and how is the smoke blown, and where and into whose face? Realism cannot overlook or pass by such important indices to mental and moral states. It is its business to be on the watch for such signs, to note down examples as an artist might make notes of features in a landscape for future use. And all this and more in the interest of reproducing what actually is going on in the everyday world of men and women, youth and children, as opposed to that romantic world which the old writers used to people with creations which represented possible, but uncommon attainments in goodness, badness, and mediocrity. Instead of this world of possible but unusual characters and incidents there is exhibited now a photographic reprint of the commonplace life most of us are living, with no elaborate plot or scheme, merely a magnifying mirror set at an angle in a window casement to reflect the passing and repassing on the street of the busy and idle, the anxious and the heedless, the beggar and the swell. But the procession must move slow enough to let the rent in the beggar's shirt be accurately measured, and the buttons on the dude's coat be counted to see if they are of the regulation number. Such delineation may doubtless go with masterly plots, valuable suggestions, and deep sympathies, but its tendency is to withdraw attention from these.

The characters of naturalism live the most of their life on the surface, keeping up appearances of one kind or another, and the superficial is what commands the energies of the latter-day realistic writer to observe and his skill to portray. Possibly this phase of fiction is the legitimate outcome and reward of the life which cultivates externals and represses emotions. At any rate it is welcomed and read, and readers do not need to be told where they can find it.

In the same set with international fiction and that of the naturalistic type is the society novel. As might be expected, if treated in a realistic way its plots are not made of gunpowder and dark lanterns.

The Society
Novel.

They seldom get beyond the efforts of one clever person to outwit, outshine, and crowd out another in the universal race for social distinction. Anything further would be in bad form. To succeed in mounting upon a rival's shoulders in reaching for the prize is about as far as a plot can be expected to carry one. But there may be bad blood enough stirred in the process to furnish an old-fashioned romance with daggers and poison. The art appears in keeping these impolite emotions out of sight. To betray them would be as damaging as an exhibition of bad temper. And so the novel of society, like society itself, keeps conventional levels on the surface, whatever currents and counter-currents may be surging below in depths which it attempts to make transparent. More skill, perhaps, is required here and now than in the outspoken days when a word was answered by a blow and this by a sword. Scott could tell how one of his cavaliers would resent an insult or Queen Elizabeth a slight; he would not be as safe now in predicting how a modern

society woman would get her revenge. So, too, readers at the beginning of the century delighted in the primitive romance with its clatter and glitter; at the close they are taken up with contests that are carried on as quietly, shrewdly, and decisively as a game of chess. The skill in waging the one conflict may be no less than in the other; the ability to see through and describe the last may be as great as to portray the first.

In the construction of such fiction William D. Howells is eminent enough to have a crowd of imitators and voluminous enough to satisfy the ordinary reader. The barriers which democratic communities try to maintain between their different classes, like the invisible lines of latitude and longitude, require much pains to define and guard, and produce little comedies and tragedies when crossed, furnishing material for such stories as "A Chance Acquaintance" and "Out of the Question," "The Rise of Silas Lapham," and "The Lady of Aroostook." Profounder reasons bring about the conclusion of "A Modern Instance," the strongest of the group which can be gathered from the work of forty years and as many volumes. In the novels a generally fair and sympathetic view of American life is presented, from which may be derived lessons of profit to a society which is not always sure of itself. In addition to these may be mentioned valuable pictures of Italian life in city and country in the "Venetian Life," "Italian Journeys," and "Tuscan Cities," good as guide books for fireside tourists.

Next to the novel of society and manners may be placed that of the social science in which everybody is just now interested in one way or another. The problems of wealth and poverty, of capital and

William D.
Howells.

Sociologic
Stories.

labor, of monopolies and small tradesmen, of disease and sanitation, of crime and reformation, furnish numerous writers with fertile themes, plots not far from their doors, and characters and incidents thick as sensations in a yellow newspaper. But these questions deserve all the care and demand all the thought which the average story writer bestows upon them. Of one thing all may be sure — that is, that the general tendency of such novels will be in the right direction, if they are to meet with popular favor and be widely read. Literature is a commodity belonging to the multitude, bought and read by one and another, and even more difficult to be cornered and monopolized than votes. This alone will keep the most of it on the right side, and help it in diffusing the best sentiments and in establishing the safest principles. The field of such novels will be found in great cities and commercial centres, where extremes of wealth and poverty, vice and virtue, are in closest proximity. And the society element in them will necessarily be large. Henry B. Fuller's "With the Procession" is an example in Chicago, and Charles Dudley Warner's "Golden House" another in New York.

One remove from such novels is the fiction which is written with a definite purpose. Critics may rail at such work, but the fact confronts them that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" has been read in more languages than any other novel of the century. Of course it cannot be said of every story which has been written in the interest of reform that it is in great demand, but people will continue to write and read fiction having an aim so long as there is a wrong to be righted. And writers will be successful in the degree that they

The Novel
with a
Purpose.

keep their definite intention behind the scenes and let their actors deal with the audience. The difficulty is, not to reveal the purpose by which a writer is so strongly possessed that he must write or go about raving. But the reader who is to catch his fever must have it conveyed in the atmosphere of the story. He may resent visible inoculation with enthusiasm for a cause, however good the cause may be. Yet there are several wrongs to man and beast which call for skilful presentation and vivid showing up to popular notice in a class of fiction that is beginning to be written.

In general it may be said that fiction is the principal branch of literature at the present day, at least if determined by the number of volumes issued and read. Writers and librarians may deplore the fact of its abundant issue, but it is better to accept it as an opportunity to instruct and direct the multitude. Even in the historical novel there is room for reproducing with fidelity the controlling ideas and actual manners of the past; and there may be an equal duty of faithfulness in transmitting to the future the real life of our own time more exactly than some of our contemporary fiction is likely to hand it down to posterity. So in every tendency, purpose, and phase of civil, social, intellectual, humane, moral, and religious life there are still unoccupied corners and some broad acres which will bear turning over once more. From present appearances there is no lack of workmen and no diminution in the call for products of every kind and grade. And the novel of the future, like that of the present, will be what readers demand. How much novelists themselves can do to direct and shape this demand is a question worth incidental consideration.

Every reader of this and the preceding chapter will miss the name of favorite novelists, and marvel that they should have been omitted or crowded out to make room for others less deserving of mention. Accordingly it must be remarked that a list of everybody's favorites would have more than filled the space assigned. Writers of fiction, especially in the short story form of it, have already become so numerous that they all can be listed only in a catalogue or directory, and should be classified according to the kinds of fiction they produce. Some of these kinds are all that it has been expedient to enumerate here, with a few prominent names belonging to each class. It will be easy to find others in each neighborhood if these are not sufficient. But even the inveterate novel reader will admit that fiction is not the whole of literature, and that a mental diet of sweets and stimulants alone is apt to induce intellectual dyspepsia.

XXXVII

AT THE CLOSE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE survey of the century in chapters of the national series has included political writers who defined the Constitution, poets who attempted ambitious epics and dramas, early novelists who wrote in the English fashion of the time, a group of literary aspirants who gathered around Irving, later novelists inspired by Cooper, poets who succeeded Bryant, Cambridge writers of prose and verse, historians who wrote of our own and foreign lands, orators who contributed classics to our literature, and novelists who are leaders in several departments of fiction. Throughout the entire succession a rapid yet healthy and symmetrical growth in our literature has been apparent. The sapling of 1800 has put forth branch and leaf, blossom and fruit, in due season and on every side. Somewhat ungainly at first, as all young growths are apt to be, scant here and overloaded there, it has at length shaped itself into reasonable proportion, strength, and grace in the sunshine and storms of a hundred years.

As we look at this accumulated and growing literature at the end of the century a few reflections are inevitable. First, concerning its volume. It would be impracticable to compute how many books have been printed in the last one hundred years, or to say how far many of them

are read to-day. It is more to the purpose to note the measure and quality of present production.

Publishers reported that in the closing year of the century the number of new books by American authors, including new editions of a comparatively few, amounted to 3,878. These figures represent Book-making in 1900. about 3,000 writers throughout the country who have had their books published. This seems a large number until it is remembered that the entire population of the country is not far from 75,000,000, which would leave but one author to 25,000 readers. Still, 3,000 writers publishing editions averaging 1,000 copies each swell the number of separate volumes to 3,000,000, or one copy for every twenty-five readers, which may not be far from the average number who read a single volume during the year. These figures do not represent all the writing that is done, — such as for magazines and newspapers, not to mention nine out of every ten bulky book manuscripts which, it is estimated, are declined by publishers.

Of these American books which were printed during the year the greatest number belong to the department of fiction — 659; but when to these native works of fiction 619 reprints or importations of foreign novels are added, it will be seen that fiction presents a total of 1,278 titles, new and old, domestic and foreign. It is safe to say that 900 of these are new, and that five novels every two days are demanded by the American public — else they would not be issued. More than one-half of these are furnished by our own writers. So are 404 juvenile books, the third in the list; law books being second, 515 in number; 347 in education and language, and 291 in theology and religion; after which follow with

decreasing numbers political and social science, biography, history, poetry and drama, literature and collected works, physical and mathematical science, geography and travel, medicine and hygiene, fine arts, useful arts, domestic and rural books, 53; sports and amusements, 35; humor and satire, 31. These lists, which do not greatly vary for the last few years, give a fair idea of the demand by readers and production by writers, so far as quantity is concerned.

With regard to quality, the test must be made by what is published and called for in the open market of the world. Time was when our best reading came from England. No American prejudice prevented the importation and reading of English books after the beginning of the present century. Preference for British authors was general. Native writers have had to win their way in the face of such preference. In spite of it they are now neck and neck with English and foreign producers of fiction, according to statistics for the year 1901. And in all the other departments taken together the demand for American works over foreign here was as eighteen to ten. The closest competition was in the field of poetry and drama where the foreign books were to the American as 112 to 184. At the same time it may be observed that the total production of new books in England for the above year was 5,971, and in France 13,362 as against 3,878 in this country, including new editions of previous publications here. Such comparisons show that here at home our literature must take its chances for popular favor in the people's judgment with the best that England and the Continent can produce. Readers will have the best without regard to nationality. Puritan exclusion is

a thing of the past. In its place came a temporary bondage to English standards and literature. Then the reaction of young America followed, and later a mild attack in certain quarters of Anglomania and in others of Anglo-phobia. Now public sentiment is getting clothed and in its right mind, and popular taste settled and steady. Its vibrations and variations are not greater than those of the magnetic needle, and it knows the chief meridians.

The element of numbers must also be taken into account in estimating the value of different works in any department. Some will say that judicious advertising will sell any book, but general commendation by friend to friend and neighbor to neighbor will do more to extend the reading of it in wider and wider circles. Something must also be credited to the direction popular interest is taking, as for example just now in the line of our own history, particularly in the Revolutionary period. This will not account entirely, but it must somewhat, for the remarkable popularity of such books as "Janice Meredith," by Paul Leicester Ford, and of "Richard Carvel," by Winston Churchill, and of "Hugh Wynne," by Dr. Mitchell. The comparatively unimportant events of that contest are now reviewed in the light of the magnificent results to which they led, thus giving them fresh significance. Moreover, a nation which is beginning to long for an heroic past such as older nations possess is ready to cast glamour over transactions which were commonplace in their outward features and sublime only in the lofty spirit and devotion which animated them. Yet with so little of external pomp and circumstance to adorn their stories, our latest novelists have placed themselves alongside the best writers of the day, according to the over-

whelming verdict of the people expressed by their demand for such books. Also the immense sale of recent works of fiction not in the historical department of it indicates an equal appreciation of artistic performance, irrespective of its scheme, and that some of our workmen in local material are standing in the front rank of novelists at the close of the century.

Rated by the demand, the first ten books of the year were "David Harum," "Richard Carvel," "When Knighthood was in Flower," "To Have and to Hold," "Janice Meredith," "The World Almanac," "Eben Holden," "The Reign of Law," "Alice of Old Vincennes," "The Day's Work." Sales ranged from 480,000 to 102,000 in the year with an average of over a quarter of a million copies each for the ten books.

In history many writers are naturally occupied with recent events connected with the Spanish war and in gathering an abundant harvest of materials, good and poor, for future use. The events themselves are as yet too near for perspective treatment in a work that shall cover the entire field. Meantime interesting monographs have been written on the "Maine," Cuba, the Philippines, the rough rider, campaigns here and there, with a general survey of the war by Henry Cabot Lodge. So also various histories of colonial or national periods have been continued with the fidelity and accuracy which characterize later historians as distinguished from the picturesque and romantic, though not necessarily inaccurate writers of an earlier group. Examples among those issued recently are found in "The Quakers in the Revolution," "The Puritan as a Colonist and Reformer," "The Puritan Republic," "The History of American Privateers,"

and "The Dutch and Quaker Colonies in America," the last of a series by the late tireless historian, John Fiske.

Next to the history of nations comes that of distinguished persons, and biography affords an equal if not a superior opportunity for literary skill. A reminiscent character has been given to recent work in this direction by T. W. Higginson in his "Contemporaries," by E. E. Hale in "Lowell and His Friends," and by Mrs. Howe in her "Reminiscences." They are all valuable contributions to the literary history of the country, as the lives of Stanton, Sherman, Stevens, Chase, and Lincoln are to the political history of a generation ago. Other biographers of "The Many-Sided Franklin" and "The True William Penn" go back to times historic in the spirit of modern research and iconoclastic revelation, which, it must be admitted, adds a new interest to well-worn subjects. A question will always be in order with regard to the right of every public man to be presented at his best by his biographer, and with such allowances as are granted him when he sits for a portrait or even a photograph. The snap-shot theory in biography may be in the interest of partial truth, but not of general justice, especially in recounting the public life of a popular hero. Foibles have a right to be destroyed by time, and it is not natural for sons to remember fathers by their faults.

The two hundred volumes of poetry which were issued in a year make a good showing, so far as numbers go, but no definite answer has been given to the frequent question about the revival of poetic Poetry. composition as distinguished from verse-making. In a few instances the somewhat indefinite line which separates the two achievements has been crossed in the greater

part of a collection or in a single poem, but the nation is still in a state of hopeful expectancy for the return of the muse with power. Readers of poetry are apt to turn to the new edition of an old favorite, while writers of verse keep on courageously in the endeavor not to let it become a lost art amidst influences which are not eminently favorable to its production. The wave law holds here as in other spheres, and where there is a trough there will by and by be a crest and a falling and rising on each side. Exactly where American poetry now is in the curve, each critic at home and abroad is at liberty to determine if he can, and whether the movement is downward or upward. In this calculation personal equations will have to be taken into account, with poetic theories innumerable. Meanwhile it is safe to wait until the general voice is lifted up with one accord announcing that a great poet or age of poetry has come into the world. Just now the nation may console itself with the reflection that the muse is showing impartiality in her favors on both sides of the ocean, and that England is setting us no copy worth incurring the old charge of imitation. She offers the opinion through one of her critics that our poets are contenting themselves with writing gracefully in simple and ordinary lyric measures without vulgarism or commonness, without epic or dramatic ambitions, or flamboyancy and spread-eagleism, and with good technique and wide culture. All of which should be received in the spirit in which it is offered, a remarkable contrast to that which prevailed with respect to American poetry, and prose also, at the beginning of the century. It is another indication that international comity is getting established in letters as in other matters.

Among miscellaneous forms of literature must be reckoned contributions to magazines which are not included in fiction and history, biography and poetry already mentioned. Of these literary criticism

Criticism.

is prominent in the larger meaning of comment about books and authors. Without it the modern reader would be more bewildered than he is in the snowstorm of leaves which fall from the press continually. Fortunately he is not obliged to read a hundredth part to know all that is worth knowing about contemporary production. If one or two daily, weekly, or monthly serials of recognized value are not enough for this purpose, a reading club or library files will furnish sufficient information and guide the reader to the best of what he likes best. The danger is that the comment about a book be taken instead of the book itself in the desire to know a little of everything. Courage to be ignorant of many things is essential to those who would know much of any one thing. One of the embarrassments in attending a world's fair is to learn the number of sights which your neighbors saw and you did not. So the books which half a dozen of them taken together have read, make one seem illiterate unless he can retaliate with a similar variety. After all in the study of literature it is the book itself rather than the book about it that is to be the principal object of attention. But to know one book from another in the same class, to find the best and perceive why it is best, is what literary history and criticism help the reader to do. They save him time, trouble, and fruitless wandering. The stranger in a city who does not know where to find the best of what he needs, and the person in a great library who does not know what he should read, are equally

pitiable contemplations. What a directory is to the one, literary comment may be to the other. This is largely furnished by review columns in journals and by critical articles in magazines, some of them valuable as literature in their way.

Other forms of literature find their place in the modern periodical, which after a growth of a century and a half has come to be a kind of perennial twelve-volume library for the people. Through their abundant patronage it is able to command the best talent, and frequently secures the first publication of what subsequently appears in book form and is sold by the ten thousand. Political and literary history, biography, fiction, poetry, science, travel, art, architecture, education and religion may all be represented in a single number of a monthly magazine. Besides, every one of these subjects and their subdivisions have their special serials so soon as a few hundred interested persons wish to learn more of their specialty. Even the automobile has its magazine. This periodical literature, intended to epitomize and diffuse knowledge, has become so vast that abridgments and summaries of itself have been called for, and reviews must be reviewed. But when condensation passes a certain point what becomes of literature as distinguished from information? Fortunately the serials of the largest circulation are holding fast to the best standards in letters, which is another way of saying that the best intelligence of the nation is upholding them in this course by their demand for the best. Subscription lists are trustworthy indications of popular tastes.

From the magazine it is but a single step to the newspaper, which everybody reads who is fit to be a citizen.

The studious cannot afford to slight it, the man who is too busy to read anything else will look for what concerns him most, and the laborer will end the day with its news. It is not the literature Newspapers. of power so much as of the antecedent knowledge, and this often of things not to be remembered. How far news columns contribute to literature depends upon the reader, as the honey value of a field depends largely upon the bee. But more and more the newspaper is encroaching upon the domain of the magazine, as this has upon the precinct of books. It is becoming the library of the populace on the instalment plan, a cyclopedia of information and literature, from the advertisement to the editorial, and whatever selections may be made from the world of letters. This itself is no longer a kingdom and an aristocracy, but a republic and a democracy. It has been revolutionized by the newspaper for all the people. And while they are profited, literature is benefited. Its field is enlarged by wider appreciation, and its usefulness augmented by learning what the multitude can be encouraged to read.

First of all, their own American literature. There is none better than its best. Exploration in the land of letters may begin, as in a wilderness, at the mouth of a river, and move toward its source. It is not far up the delta to the English stream, and then the course is clear until the language becomes unintelligible. Between the sixteenth century and the fourteenth all needful antiquities will be found. The ordinary reader will be content with the authors of the last three hundred years in America and England.

XXXVIII

AMERICAN HUMOR

HUMOR has been as much defined as poetry or literature, with a similar indefiniteness of result. The venerable and discarded theory that one's disposition and temper depend upon the combination of four principal humors or moistures of the body satisfied the ancients for generations ; but good blood must have had a struggle to maintain cheerfulness against black bile, sluggish phlegm, and irascible choler. It would be interesting to know what proportions of melancholy, apathy, and anger were supposed to be conducive to a sense of the incongruous and ridiculous, which itself finally appropriated the name of Humor by preëminence, and kept it after it had been lost by the four original fluids. Very likely the infusion of splenetic elements was small for genuine humor, although for wit, irony, and satire the formula may have varied. Humor is now apt to be dry.

Modern reflection is disposed to assign the origin and causes of humor to intellectual and spiritual combinations, subject possibly and occasionally to such corporeal disturbances as indigestion and other ailments, when the most brilliant witticisms may seem meaningless and untimely. In short, humor is now regarded as a personal atmosphere, charged as with an electric fluid which glows and gleams without scorching and blasting. When it

flashes and strikes it gets other names according to the nearness of the bolt to us and ours, and according to the damage done. But it is the playful and harmless mood of it that is now to be observed.

A backward view might make one believe that modern humor is the result of an evolutionary process. The practical entered into the jokes of our predecessors as it does into that of children. It is not necessary to hold that the humor of primitive man was largely malignant, and akin to brute exultation over a fallen foe, in order to show that there has been a great advance from the cave-dweller's notion of humor to that of the present day. One need go no farther back than Ben Franklin's time, or to the Puritan age at most, to learn that a certain rawness belonged to the humor of our ancestors which has been eliminated from the current article in this generation. Sympathy, humanity, and a nice sense of the fitness of things have entered into an appreciation of even the incongruous and the ludicrous, so that humor no longer laughs at misfortune, but discriminates between genuine worth fallen by mishap, and pretence and pomposity floundering in the mire. In a word, humor has become civilized with other elemental traits, and refined with the social improvement of the classes. Naturally there will always be different grades of it in any community or nation. The rustic and the urban will have diverse standards, as the child and his elders; but the average sense of what is amusing keeps pace with the advance of a people in sympathy and humanity. The following incident from a remote age indicates the progress that humor has made, as well as the different estimates of it at the time by the boor and the nobleman.

"A gentleman asked a shepherd whether the river was fordable or not. 'Yes,' says he; but going to try he flounced in over head and ears. 'Why, thou rogue,' says he, 'did you not tell me it might be passed over?' 'Truly, sir, I thought so, for my geese go over and back every day.'"

The next marks a stage or two forward:

"One seeing another wear a threadbare cloak, asked him whether his cloak was not sleepy or no? 'Why do you ask?' said the other. 'Because,' saith he, 'I think it hath not had a nap this seven years.'"

The growth of English humor in kindly qualities might be traced alongside the development of its people and soil from barbarism and bogs. A good deal of horse-play would be found prevailing down to recent times, some heaviness at first, as might be expected in a damp climate, and now and then bluntness or sharpness as of Swift and the reviewers. But Addison and Lamb, Thackeray and Dickens stand for later stages in the progress towards a broad and genial outlook at the inconsistencies, inconsequences, and incoherencies of the world and life which furnish food for humor. The final product to date has attained to present race qualities in health and heartiness, overflowing with good spirits, and possessing a justness and fineness of standards in humor, as in literature, which are best appreciated when observed on the ground and among the best of English people, rather than in stray copies of comic papers which are not improved by an Atlantic voyage.

It is not needful to trace the derivation of American humor from the British. National sentiment would insist that we have been here long enough to have a characteristic humor of our own; and most foreigners who have

travelled from east to west and from north to south, are ready to assent to the assertion. This humor has, however, so many aspects that they find it as difficult to unify them as to comprehend how so many States can be a unit. Indeed, such variety renders characterization of American humor perilous, since local peculiarities often obscure general traits. Still, travel and intercommunication keep the coin of wit current and tolerably uniform; a condition to which commercial travellers incidentally contribute.

Chronologically and geographically American humor started along the eastern seaboard and radiated westward and southward. It also began with unmixed English stock, absorbing other races afterward.

Early Humor
in America.

It is safe, therefore, to take Yankee humor as representative of the early form. Of course it would be English in primitive New England, but without the jovial, rollicking spirit which belonged to the Cavalier rather than to the Puritan. Lowell certainly was not a sympathizer with Cromwell and the Commonwealth when he wrote:

“A strange hybrid indeed did circumstances beget here in the new world upon the old Puritan stock, and the earth never saw before such a niggard geniality, such calculating fanaticism, such cast-iron enthusiasm, such sour-faced humor, such close-fisted generosity.”

What kind of humor, then, may be expected in such a people? — for all these traits were not lacking in the first two hundred years, and have not yet wholly disappeared. It must have been grim at first. “Living between the Indian devil and the deep sea” there was not much to excite uproarious laughter. Heresy and the toleration of it, with any imported fashions of behavior from London, were about the only provocatives of a humor not always

genial. Ward of Ipswich, preacher and law-maker, rhymster and punster, was its first exponent. He must have been to his solemn neighbors in Essex as "Life" or "Punch" to the present generation. The "Cobler" here, and the "Cobler's Boy" in England doubtless caused a sanctified chuckle among the godly on the Bay, and a broad laugh by Thomas Fuller, his contemporary and kindred wit across the water.

"Perhaps thou accountest a pulpit a box, and I'll tell thee a brief story to that effect. A little child being at sermon and observing the minister very vehement in his words and gesture, cried out, 'Mother, why don't the people let the man out of the box?' Then I entreat thee behave thyself well in preaching, lest men say truly, this is Jack in a box."

And for a sample of Puritan punning:

"Marmalade may marre my Lady; me it shall not. March pane shall not be my arch bane."

But this was tame wit for the Agawam satirist. And there are other examples whose texture was better suited to that rough age than to ours, having always an ecclesiastico-political flavor.

There were many of these before Cotton Mather gave a fresh impulse to sacred punning and solemn humor. He was not unconscious that he had a gift for "smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention." These consisted chiefly in rearranging the letters of distinguished names, as he remarks:

"There is a certain little sport of wit in anagrammatizing the names of men which has sometimes afforded reflections very monitory or very satirical. But of all the anagrammatizers that have been trying their fancies since the days of our first father I believe there never was that made so many or so nimbly

as our Mr. Wilson, who would force devout instructions out of his anagrams."

Such examples had countless imitators, and the divines of New England at the end of the eighteenth century vied with each other in twisting their prenomens and cognomens into significant phrases, and expanding them into sentences, generally Latin.

Mather Byles was a worthy successor of his namesake, and distinguished himself as a punster of more secular tastes, inclining to a wit which was nourished at classical fountains and was often practical; as when the town councilmen got stalled in a mudhole in front of his house, and he came out remarking, "Gentlemen, I have often complained to you of this nuisance without any attention being paid to it, and now I am very glad to see you stirring in this matter."

Franklin was the first American humorist to break away from the contortions of his predecessors, as he also did from their literary prejudices. His genuine and abundant humor ran far from ecclesiastical channels, following the course of the new intellectual and social drift which he had largely set in motion. "Poor Richard's" wit is mostly worldly wisdom, and the humor of the "Autobiography" is that of personal revelation, but in his letters and other papers there is often an instructive and imaginative view of evil that is worth pages of homily, as in the following on the misery and ethics of warfare:

"A young angel being sent to this world for the first time, arrived in the middle of a long day of fighting between the fleets of Rodney and De Grasse. When through the clouds of smoke he saw decks covered with the mangled limbs and bodies of dead and dying and the destruction the crews were eagerly

dealing each other, he turned angrily to his guide and said, 'You blundering blockhead, you undertook to conduct me to the earth, and you have brought me into hell.' 'No, sir,' says the guide, 'I have made no mistake; this is really the earth, and these are men. Devils never treat one another in this cruel manner; they have more sense and more of what men (vainly) call humanity.'"

His proposition for the American army to go back to aboriginal bows and arrows — at a time when gunpowder could not be easily obtained — appears to have a smile behind it notwithstanding the six sound reasons he brings forward for the adoption of primitive weapons. John Adams represented contemporary opinion when he said that Franklin was a "great genius, a great wit, a great humorist, a great satirist, and a great politician," and added, "That he was a great philosopher, moralist, or statesman is more questionable."

There were provocatives of humor during the Revolution despite the sufferings of the troops and the dire straits of the country. The very grotesqueness of the soldiers' misery sometimes raised humorous comment among themselves and oftener among their foes, while the blunders of unskilled officers and legislators caused ripples of ridicule to spread over the land. Some of this humor is embalmed in ballads and broadsides, and some was too broad for print; but American misfortunes were never so great as to extinguish cheerful wit and banter.

It was well into the nineteenth century when the professional humorist appeared. The village wit and the funny man of the town had always existed, and the humorist who took to type was the state or national representative, the most diverting man of all, having also a literary knack.

One of the first of these was Judge Haliburton of Nova Scotia, who made himself at home here as Sam Slick, Yankee clock-maker and pedler, whose shrewd bargains were more appreciated in the States and even in England than in Halifax. According to his appreciative biographers many bright sayings of his successors have a marvellous resemblance to originals by the witty judge. The Indian who explained to the governor expressing surprise at seeing him drunk so soon again, that it was "all same old drunk;" the country girl who "guessed she was n't brought up at all, but growed up;" the recommendation to hypnotize passengers as a preventive of sea-sickness; the Bad Boy of the Letter Bag, and other characters and incidents have found later counterparts, so that "Artemas Ward" seems to have had reason for pronouncing him the "Father of the American School of humor." Even the illustrations of "The Clockmaker" are said to have supplied the conventional type of "Uncle Sam" with furry hat, long goatee, and striped trousers.

An immediate successor, Seba Smith, came from a nearer "down east," where he made the first daily paper beyond Boston attractive by the then famous "Jack Downing Letters," now faintly reminiscent of local and national politics as far back as Jackson, Polk, and other celebrities of his "Thirty Years out of the Senate." As illuminating political history and illustrating the genuine Yankee dialect, so often distorted, the lucubrations of the "Major" will always have a value of their own, while their humor is redolent of the Maine woods and pastures.

"It was a very unlucky hit when President Polk sent old Zach Taylor down to Mexico. He was n't the right man. It can't be helped now, but it's like to be the ruin of our party.

The Democratic party haint seen a well day since Taylor first begun his Pally Alto battles ; and now we are all shiverin' as bad as if we had the fever and agay. I don't know, after all, but this annexin' Mexico will turn out to be an unlucky blow ; for what will it profit the Democratic party if it gain the whole world and lose the presidency ?”

This and more down to Pierce and Buchanan, with early anxieties about Cuba, is all suggestive of the first series of “Biglow Papers,” and of what political humor and satire were to accomplish in moulding public sentiment.

With the reformatory verse of Lowell seems to have been introduced full-fledged the element of bad spelling, or phonetic orthography, as its serious advocates now call it. This was well enough for once in “Homer Wilbur” and “Bird-o'-freedom Sawin,” because there was something more than horse sense beneath the Yankee lingo ; but how far phonetics are essential humor may be a question, — except when they are taken seriously as a reformatory movement. Too much is apt to tire, to say nothing of unconsciously corrupting one's orthography, as street-car advertisements may confuse one's syntax and confound his prosody. The tacit apology is, that wisdom is heightened by contrast with illiteracy, as in real life. Unfortunately profundity is often obscured by the process, and attention to real sapience is diverted to distorted spelling. The chief pioneer of it seems to have apprehended its incidental effect when he made the reviewer say in the “Universal Littery Universe”: “We rejoice to meet with an author national enough to break away from the slavish deference, too common among us, to English grammar and orthography.”

Dialect and
Bad Spelling.

This, it will be remembered, is the paragraph in which the fashion was introduced in full feather :

“Our Hosea wuz down to Boston last week, and he see a cruetin Sarjunt a struttin round as popler as a hen with 1 chicking, with 2 fellers a drummin and fiffin arter him like all nater. The sarjunt he thout Hosea hed n’t gut his i teeth cut cos he looked a kindo’s though he ’d jest com down, so he cal’lated to hook him in, but Hosy wood n’t take none o’ his sarse for all he hed much as 20 Rooster’s tales stuck onto his hat and eenamost enuf brass bobbin up and down on his shoulders and figureed onto his coat and trousis, let alone wut nater hed sot in his featers, to make a 6 pounder on.”

And then three hundred and fifty pages more of prose and verse in which the spelling is but a fraction of the humor, wit, and satire. But its success started a bad spelling school. Imitation was easier in the superficial characteristic than in the deeper ones. However, some excellent work has been done by humorists whose skill has compassed something beyond juggling with vocabularies.

One of these was David Ross Locke, better known as “Petroleum Vesuvius Nasby,” whose letters and lectures on the woes of Democracy Northern

Nasby.

and Southern during the Civil War and afterward belong to the influences which were formative of public opinion in a critical time. President Lincoln kept the pamphlets near by for diversion in hours of gloom, and Charles Sumner consented to write an introduction to the entire collection. As preacher, postmaster, and politician of the “poor white trash” class, Nasby mirrors the slow transition from conditions previous to the war to those which were finally established. He does this in a hundred and ninety chapters of letters, addresses, and meditations which

are a humorous comment on the history of ten disturbed years, constituting the "Nasby Papers," to which were added other volumes for ten years more. In this instance the orthography is what might be expected from the character personated. It is as good as the principles he maintains and the whiskey he drinks. But the essence of his wit is not in the abbreviation of his words. It is rather in the frankness with which a Northern sympathizer with Southern interests and institutions in the middle of the last century unbosoms himself as the fortunes of his party go up and down, and the spirits of the postmaster at the "Confederit X Roads" rise and fall — according to the supply of corn juice from a neighboring distillery. This is mildly amusing for a dozen chapters; but before the hundredth is reached provincialisms grow monotonous, and features of discourse repeat themselves like those of the servants on patriarch Guttle's plantation. But it must be remembered that the series appeared at intervals during several years and was taken in brief installments, keeping up a prolonged smile throughout half the land. It was 1869 when this appeared:

"I hev it at last! I see a lite! I shall not go to Noo York, nor shall I be forced to leave the Corners, at least permanently. I hev at last struck ile! I shel live like a gentleman; I shel pay for my likker, and be on an ekal footin with other men. Bascom, whose smile is happiness, but whose frown is death, will smile onto me wunst more. To Miss Susan Murphy I owe my present happiness. The minit I notist that she had put in a claim agin the Government for property yoused doorin the war by Fedral soljery, I to-wunst saw where my finanshel salvation was. Immejetly I histed my shingle ez a agent to prossekoot claims agin the Government for property destroyed or yoused doorin the late onpleasantnes by Fedral troops, and in two hours I hed biznis on my hands, and money in my pockets. Ez

a matter of course, I insisted upon a retainin fee uv ten dollars in each case. . . . Almost every white citizen of the Corners has a claim. Some hundred or more who never hed anything before or doorin the war, and who are in the same condishen now, hev put in claims rangin from \$10,000 to \$20,000, offerin me the half I git. They kin swear to each other's loyalty, which will redoose the cost uv evidence to a mere nominal sum."

"Josh Billings," otherwise Henry W. Shaw, was another dislocator of dictionary words, but his humor was shrewd and inclusive enough to cover any eccentricity of form in which it might be clothed. It ^{Billings.} would have been just as effective in conventional English, as may be seen by translating the following:

"Common sense is most ginnerally dispised bi those who haint got it."

"Men don't never seem to git tired ov talking about themselves, but i hav heard them when i thought they showed signs ov weekness."

"As in a game ov cards, so in the game ov life, we must play what is dealt tew us ; and the glory consists not so mutch in winning, as in playing a poor hand well."

"Hunting happiness is a good deal like hunting crows ; when yu haint got yure gun with yu, yu kan alwas git a grate deal nearer tew the crows."

Still, no humorist has packed more homespun wisdom into small compass than this one ; and there is sounder philosophy on the conduct of life in some of his short chapters of proverbs than in some treatises upon ethics that might be mentioned. He is always on the right side, and usually upon the sensible side in advocating it, uttering as little nonsense as can be expected from one who ranges over every department of human interest.

While some of our humorists trace their lineage to

"Mrs. Ramsbottom," exercising her woman's rights in the matter of spelling, there was one who could point

to "Mrs. Malaprop," in her pretentious ignorance playing with words too large for safety

Shillaber.

as an accessory of wit. Such persons occur just often enough in every community, or recur in one's memory, to warrant the employment of this eccentricity as an element of humor. Shillaber seized upon it at an early day, and "Mrs. Partington" has become the name of every one who "commuses" a newspaper, builds a "pizarro" to his house, or sells his "right of iniquity."

" 'How limpid you walk ! ' said a voice behind us ; ' what is the cause of your lameness ? ' ' Gout, ' said we, briefly, almost surlily. ' Dear me, ' said she ; ' you are highly flavored ! It was only rich people and epicacs in living that had the gout in olden times. ' ' Ah ! ' we growled. ' Poor soul ! ' she continued, ' the best remedy I know for it is an embarkation of Roman wormwood and lobelia, though some say a cranberry poultice is best, and whether either is a rostrum for the gout or not I don't know. If it was a fraction of the arm, I could know jest what to subscribe. ' "

These "Partington Pearls," however, are but a small portion of the author's contributions to the humorous literature of his time. His stories in prose and verse have an atmosphere of quiet mirth running through them, appealing to a people whose smiling has been done inside for generations. As an early writer of the short, amusing story he showed that it is not a recent invention, and as an inculcator of a genial domestic philosophy by ludicrous portrayal of scenes apt to occur through misunderstanding, he became a vindicator of humor as a beneficent agent in families and communities.

There was a time when Charles Farrar Browne, alias

"Artemus Ward," was considered the greatest of American humorists, especially by Englishmen when they fairly comprehended the nature of his wit, accepting it as something native to a new and strange country. In his capacity of lecture-showman he could make his witticisms clear by repetition and variation, and London audiences saw the point of his offer "to call at their houses and explain any jokes they might not understand." Why not, if so eminent a man as John Bright did really remark: "I must say I cannot see what people find to enjoy in this lecture. The information is meagre and is presented in a desultory, disconnected manner." When it is remembered that these so-called lectures were nothing but a string of droll observations, the statesman's comment becomes almost as amusing as Ward himself. When the sayings which had been accumulating in various newspapers were gathered in a volume their distinctive character became clear. It is said that he used to laugh uproariously as he was composing them. Certainly they made others laugh, more in the day of their publication, perhaps, than they do now. He outspelled all his predecessors, and in a continuous explosion of ridiculous surprises outdid them all. His show was always "moral," and his position on the sensible as well as the right side of most questions. Of all his utterances the chapter on the Mormon is probably the best remembered, while that on the Prince of Wales has an interest which has lingered forty years and is now revived.

"'Albert Edard, I must go, but previs to doin so I will observe that you soot me. Yure a good feller, Albert Edard, & tho I'm agin Princes as a ginerall thing, I must say I like the cut of your Gib. When you git to be King try and be as good

a man as your mother has been! . . . Albert Edard, adoo!' I tuk his hand, which he shook warmly, & givin him a perpetooal free pars to my show, & also parses to take hum for the Queen & Old Albert, I put on my hat and walkt away. 'Mrs. Ward,' I solilerquized, as I walkt along, 'Mrs. Ward, ef you could see your husband now, just as he proudly emerjis from the presunts of the futur King of England, you'd be sorry you called him a Beest jest becaws he cum home tired l nite and wantid to go to bed without takin orf his boots.'"

In a single chapter on American humor mention must necessarily be limited to its chief representatives. Other

Other
Humorists.

names will occur to one and another as claimants for priority. To say no more of our eminent humorous authors from Irving to Holmes than has already been said in previous chapters, the names of such professionals as "Orpheus C. Kerr," "Bill Arp," "Eli Perkins," "Max Adler," "M. Quad," "The Danbury News Man," "Mr. Dooley," and others, will occur to all who find mental recreation in the comic paper and the funny column. Besides, almost every writer of eminence in the land has struck out, by accident or otherwise, at least one humorous composition. Then there are a few writers underneath whose weighty wisdom is a continuous flow of humor, which will bubble to the surface in spite of all restraint and reserve. They get the name of humorists by preëminence when they deserve something more and better. They are not taken according to their intention, because readers are looking for mirth only, and their lessons of wisdom are lost in the merriment they cannot help creating. Let the prince of them, "Mark Twain," stand for the extremely small group to which he belongs, whose genial wisdom and wide sympathy are none the less true and sincere because irradiated with generous

humor and radiant with kindly wit. Such writers do much towards eliminating native acidity from the fruit of a dry soil and a sharp climate, giving it the mellowness which comes with prosperous age, and the sweetness that charity brings.

Of American humor in general it may be said, that the tone of it has improved with that of our literature in all departments. The ancient frown upon things amusing being relaxed, the emancipated Amer- Humor of
To-Day. ican at first burst into a loud laugh at wit which was sharp, coarse, or practical, especially when it struck his neighbor. Then came the day of prolix stories with pointed endings, and the trite variations of putting up a stovepipe, setting a hen, entertaining a mother-in-law, followed by the age of poor puns and worse spelling. Meanwhile and always, particularly by foreigners, an amazing extravagance of statement has been regarded as a main feature of our humor. A better period is now well advanced, when leisurely meditation has been made possible, and is banishing the proverbially sober aspect of the witty professional, and when humor is becoming broadly pervasive in literature rather than a specialty, or when so, the recognized good fortune of a few high-class journals. Its character is likewise growing urbane and humane, laughing with one rather than at one. Its mission thus becomes beneficent, particularly when one can attain to the height of a self-contemplation which will permit him to laugh with himself over his own inconsistencies and inconsequences, mistakes and surprises. In this way humor may become the shortest and pleasantest road to a serviceable philosophy of living.



A Reading List

REQUESTS frequently made for an outline of reading in American literature have led to a compilation of the following list of authors and titles. While it is intended to be representative rather than exhaustive, it is sufficient to illustrate the growth of our literature and to satisfy the demands of the ordinary reader.

In the National Period the succession of authors' names has generally been determined by the date of the first book published: the second date, when given, marks the limit of publication. In case two departments are represented, as prose and verse, history and fiction, an example of each is usually cited. Others, and possibly better, may be found in library and publishers' catalogues; but these will serve to illustrate different periods and sections, styles and characters.

COLONIAL PERIOD.

- JOHN SMITH. True Relation, 1608. Other writings to 1631.
WILLIAM STRACHEY. A True Repertory of the Wrack and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, 1610.
BRADFORD and WINSLOW. Relation and Journal, 1621.
EDWARD WINSLOW. Good News from New England, 1624.
GEORGE SANDYS. Translation of Ovid's Metamorphosis, 1621-24.
WILLIAM WOOD. New England's Prospect, 1634.
THOMAS MORTON. New English Canaan, 1637.
RICHARD MATHER and others. The Bay Psalm Book, 1640.
THOMAS LECHFORD. Plain Dealing, 1642.
ROGER WILLIAMS. The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution, 1644. Others to 1676.
NATHANIEL WARD. The Simple Cobler of Agawam, 1647.
JOHN ELIOT. Progress of the Gospel among the Indians, 1649.
ANNE BRADSTREET. The Tenth Muse, 1650.
EDWARD JOHNSON. Wonder-Working Providence, 1654.
JOHN HAMMOND. Leah and Rachel, Virginia and Maryland, 1656.

- JOHN NORTON. *The Heart of New England Rent*, 1659.
 MICHAEL WIGGLESWORTH. *The Day of Doom*, 1662.
 GEORGE ALSOP. *Character of Maryland*, 1666.
 NATHANIEL MORTON. *New England's Memorial*, 1670.
 INCREASE MATHER. *Life of Richard Mather*, 1670.
 SAMUEL SEWALL. *Diary*, 1673-1729.
 COTTON MATHER. *Magnalia*, finished, 1697.
 CHARLES WOOLLEY. *A Two Years' Journal in New York*, 1701.
 ROBERT BEVERLY. *History of Virginia*, 1705.
 JOHN WILLIAMS. *The Redeemed Captive*, 1707.
 THOMAS CHURCH. *Entertaining Passages*, 1716.
 JAMES BLAIR. *Present State of Virginia and the College*, 1727.
 WILLIAM BYRD. *History of the Dividing Line*, 1729.
 MATHER BYLES. *Poems*, 1744.
 WILLIAM STITH. *History of Virginia*, 1747.
 BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. *Opinions and Conjectures concerning Electrical Matter*, 1750. See *Works*.
 JONATHAN EDWARDS. *Freedom of the Will*, 1754.
 WILLIAM SMITH. *History of New York*, 1757.
 THOMAS HUTCHINSON. *History of Massachusetts*, 1764.
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